

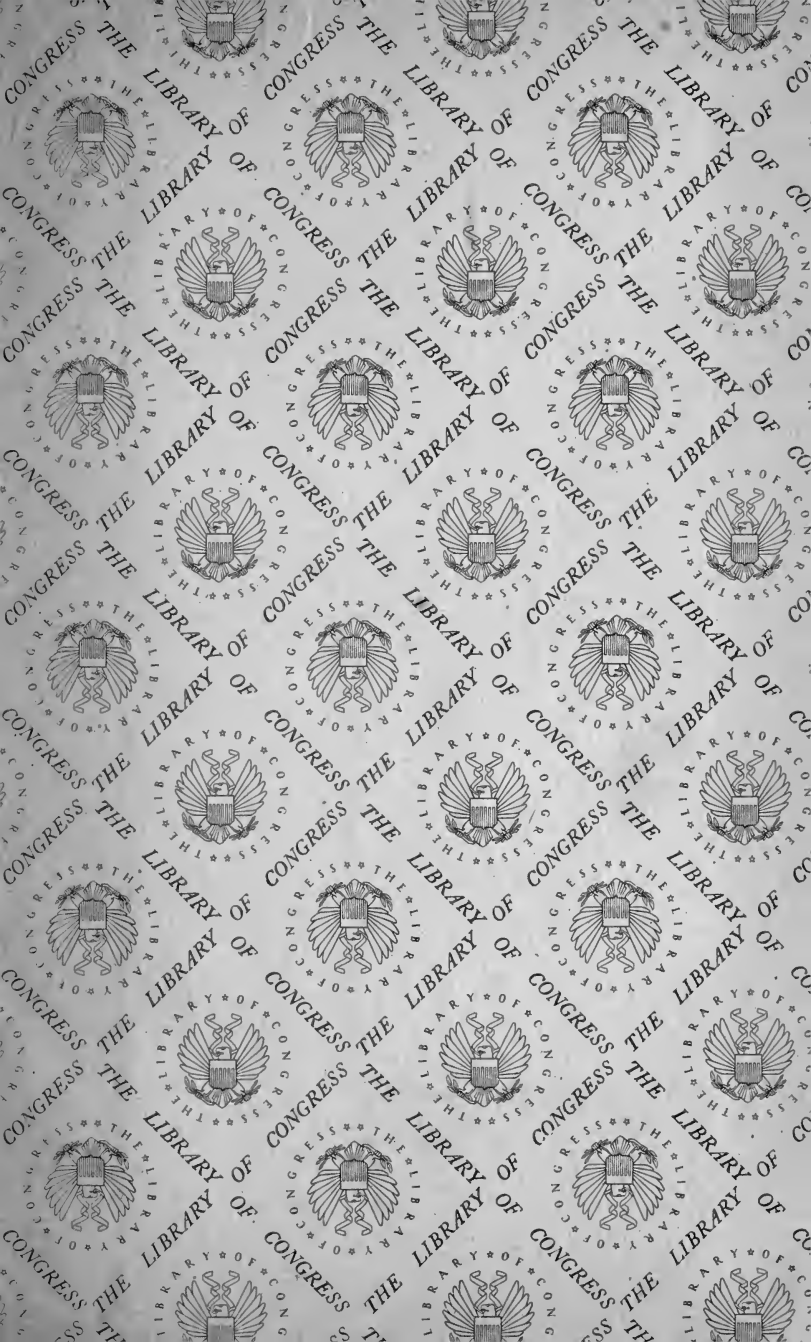
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SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE.  
After the painting by Peter Vandyke.

English Classics — Star Series

# THE RIME

OF

# THE ANCIENT MARINER

BY

SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE

EDITED FOR SCHOOL USE

BY

CARLETON ELDREDGE NOYES, A.M.

INSTRUCTOR IN ENGLISH IN HARVARD UNIVERSITY



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To  
LEWIS E. GATES



## PREFACE

As *The Ancient Mariner*, because of the difficulties it presents, may be taken up to advantage toward the end of the pupil's preparation of the English reading required for admission to college, this edition of the poem is designed especially for the use of more advanced students. Assuming on the part of the pupil some knowledge of many of the texts assigned, the Introduction is intended, not only to prepare the student to understand the poem itself, but also to point the way to a comprehensive study of literature in its larger significance; and it attempts, accordingly, by the use of the historical method, to set *The Ancient Mariner* in its right relations with reference both to Coleridge and to its place in English literature. By thus presenting the poem in its wider bearings, the book aims to suggest certain fundamental principles of literary investigation, and, by bringing the student to a true conception of what literature is, to stimulate an interest in further study.

The text here printed is reproduced without change from the edition of Coleridge's Poetical and Dramatic Works published in 1829. This reissue of the definitive edition of 1828 has been chosen as the standard for the text, as it was the last to receive Coleridge's personal supervision. The trifling inconsistencies in punctuation and in

the use of capitals and quotation marks, as well as the archaic spelling "chuse", have been retained; for these little oddities are so slight as not to be misleading, and they lend a quaintness in keeping with the spirit of the poem. The exact reproduction, without regard to present standards of correctness, of the poem as Coleridge left it, furnishes an authentic text, and brings the reader close to the poet's intention.

Acknowledgment is due to Messrs. Houghton, Mifflin & Company for permission to use the citation from Lowell's address on Coleridge.

CAMBRIDGE, MASS.,

April, 1900.



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## INTRODUCTION

### I. BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

A LITTLE more than a hundred years ago there was published in Bristol, England, a small volume of *Lyrical Ballads With a Few Other Poems*. Of the twenty-three poems comprised in the little book the first was *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, and the last was the *Lines written a few miles above Tintern Abbey*. The title page bore no author's name, the volume contained no hint of the poet's identity. The *Lyrical Ballads*, given to the public in this unpretending fashion, were the work of two young men, the authors respectively of the first and the last poem of the collection; the two poets were Samuel Taylor Coleridge and William Wordsworth.

The *Rime* which introduced the volume and the *Lines* which ended it were characteristic of the two men. The spiritual elevation and repose, the insight into "the life of things," the "sense sublime of something far more deeply interfused," these are the possession of Wordsworth's special genius; and the lines in which this interpretation of nature and man finds expression are characteristic of Wordsworth's manner at its best: from this manner the entire body of his poetical work differs less in kind than in degree. For *The Ancient Mariner*, on the other hand, it is not easy to find a single formula. The mystery of it, its magic, its reality in unreality, — like "Life-in-Death," — its suggestion of new worlds and other states of being, rather obscure than reveal the poet's mind and spirit. Wordsworth's genius, incomprehensible and inexplicable as it is, is relatively simple. It is the one vision of the world-order,

a continuous pondering "on man, on nature, and on human life"; and the expression of this single reading of the universe varies only in power and intensity. The genius of Coleridge is complex, enigmatical, chaotic, throwing off myriads of many-colored sparks, and at no time burning, like Wordsworth's, with the white and steady flame of invariable truth. Wordsworth is the seer, clear-eyed and penetrating; Coleridge is the dreamer of dreams.

From his earliest years Coleridge had a hold on unreality as the highest, if not the only reality. Born in Devon, the "English Italy," in 1772, Coleridge inherited some of the characteristics of his father, the "kind, learned, simple hearted" vicar and schoolmaster of the parish.<sup>1</sup> The son likened the vicar to Parson Adams in "learning, good-heartedness, absentness of mind, and excessive ignorance of the world"; and certain of these qualities early manifested themselves in the boy. The mother was practical and unemotional, but happily gifted with sound sense. The second wife of the vicar, she was the mother of one daughter and nine sons, of whom the poet, Samuel Taylor, was the youngest. By his first wife the vicar was the father of three sons, one of whom had died in infancy. Despite this large family of brothers, Coleridge's boyhood was solitary, apart, unshared; his brothers did not understand him and left him to his dreams and vagaries. So he was his own playfellow; and we know that he did not lack for interesting, if strange company. His was such a boyhood as we like to fancy is the boyhood of a poet.

<sup>1</sup> He published or rather attempted to publish several works. Chief among them was a Latin Grammar in which he proposed an innovation in the names of the cases. "My father's new nomenclature was not likely to become popular, although it must be allowed to be both sonorous and expressive. *Exempli gratia*, he calls the ablative the *quippe-quare-quale-quia-quidditive case!*" He used to quote Hebrew to his parishioners, as the "immediate language of the Holy Ghost."

As the youngest of the family, "Sam," as he was called, was the favorite of his father and mother; their little special attentions aroused the ill-will of his brothers. "I was," he says, "in earliest childhood huffed away from the enjoyments of muscular activity in play, to take refuge at my Mother's side on my little stool, to read my little book, and to listen to the talk of my elders. I was driven from life in motion to life in thought and sensation. I never played except by myself, and then only acted over what I had been reading or fancying, or half one, half the other, with a stick cutting down weeds and nettles, as one of the Seven Champions of Christendom. . . . I never thought as a child, never had the language of a child." Thus, instead of taking part in boyish sports, he "read incessantly," — a habit which stayed with him through life. At six years of age he had read, besides "all the gilt-cover little books that could be had at that time, and likewise all the uncovered tales of Tom Hickathrift, Jack the Giant-killer, etc.," Belisarius, Robinson Crusoe, Philip Quarles, and the Arabian Nights' Entertainments, one tale of which, he says, "made so deep an impression on me, that I was haunted by spectres, whenever I was in the dark." "So I became a *dreamer*, and acquired an indisposition to all bodily activity. . . . Sensibility, imagination, vanity, sloth, and feelings of deep and bitter contempt for all who traversed the orbit of my understanding, were even then prominent and manifest."

What the child began to be from three to six, he continued to be from six to nine. In this last year he was admitted to the grammar school, and soon outstripped all of his age. At this time he had a fever; nightly he said as a prayer the old rhyme beginning, "Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John." When his mother told him that a neighbor did not come to see him for fear of catching the fever, he answered, "Ah, Mamma! the four Angels round my bed

an't afraid of catching it!" "Frequently have I," he says, "(half awake and half asleep, my body diseased and fevered by my imagination), seen armies of ugly things bursting in upon me, and these four angels keeping them off." Here are the brain and the imagination already active which struck off *The Ancient Mariner*.

In the boyhood development of this "myriad-minded" man, the poet was early followed by the philosopher, — a sequence typical of his later experience. His father had resolved that the boy should be a parson. He used to take his son on his knee and hold long conversations with him. One winter evening, on a walk, he explained to the boy wonderful things about the stars. "I heard him with profound delight and admiration, but without the least mixture of wonder or incredulity. For from my early reading of fairy tales and genii, etc., etc., my mind had been habituated to the *Vast*. . . . I regulated all my creeds by my conceptions, not by my *sight*, even at that age." With Coleridge imagination and speculation went hand in hand.

The father died when Coleridge was not quite nine years old. The following year a friend secured for the boy a Christ's Hospital presentation. Donning the blue coat and yellow stockings, Coleridge entered the school in September, 1782.

Of what Christ's Hospital was in the days of Coleridge, Lamb, and Leigh Hunt, these men have left us ample record.<sup>1</sup> From them we learn what hardships were suffered by the orphan pensioners. The food was poor and insufficient; their appetites were "dampened, never satisfied;" the discipline was barbarously severe, and the mental training strenuous. For all that, the system was, in the upshot,

<sup>1</sup> *Biog. Lit.*, Chap. I., Letter to Poole, February 19, 1798; Lamb, *Christ's Hospital Five and Thirty Years Ago, Recollections of Christ's Hospital*; Leigh Hunt, *Autobiography*, Chaps. III. and IV.

salutary. "Thank Heaven!" exclaims Coleridge, "I was flogged instead of being flattered. However, as I climbed up the school, my lot was somewhat alleviated."

The school life of Coleridge was quite as extraordinary as his childhood. "From eight to fourteen I was a playless day dreamer . . . my whole being was, with eyes closed to every object of present sense, to crumple myself up in a sunny corner and read, read, read." Although he was not ambitious, and did not know the meaning of emulation, his "talents and superiority" placed him at the head of his class. But the difference, he says, between him and his schoolfellows, in his lessons and exercises, bore no proportion to the "measureless difference" between him and them "in the wide, wild wilderness of useless unarranged book-knowledge and book-thoughts." He read through a circulating library from A to Z at the rate of two volumes a day.<sup>1</sup> Besides the classic authors studied in the regular school course, not a small field to cover, he read Plato and Plotinus. He was seized with a rage for metaphysics, and he fancied himself an atheist. The desultory nature of his reading had its counterpart in his acts. In these school years there showed itself that uncertainty of purpose and that waywardness which characterized his later life, and made him the "man of magnificent beginnings." He was taken with a fancy to become a shoemaker. He made application for an apprenticeship, but was promptly brought to his senses by the clear-headed, if unsympathetic master,

<sup>1</sup> His access to the circulating library Coleridge owed to an amusing incident. Walking along the crowded Strand one day he was lost, as usual, in his own fancies. This time it was Leander swimming the Hellespont, whose part he was acting out in imagination, and he was thrusting out his arms, as if swimming. His hand struck a stranger's pocket. The boy was seized as a pickpocket. His explanation, however, so extraordinary and yet so manifestly sincere, delighted the gentleman with its novelty, and he paid a subscription to a circulating library for the benefit of the Bluecoat boy.

Boyer.<sup>1</sup> Soon afterward Coleridge's brother Luke, who was studying surgery, came to London to work in the hospitals. A passion for medicine took hold upon the Bluecoat boy: he read all the medical and surgical books he could lay hands on; and on holiday afternoons he visited the hospitals with his brother, happy if he was permitted even to hold a plaster. Among the vagaries of his school days we must count, also, his first love affair. This preoccupation held him for a longer time than most of his youthful caprices. His passion for the sister of a schoolmate he carried with him to the university.

But in these years what of the poet? He was, for a schoolboy of his age, he says, "above par in English versification, — and had already produced two or three compositions which . . . were above mediocrity." But for a time poetry yielded to metaphysics. Before his fifteenth year he had bewildered himself in metaphysics and theological controversy; poetry, and even novels and romances, became insipid to him. From the pursuit of metaphysics, however, he was "auspiciously withdrawn, partly, indeed, by an accidental introduction to an amiable family,<sup>2</sup> chiefly, however, by the genial influence of a style of poetry so tender and yet so manly, so natural and real, and yet so dignified and harmonious, as the sonnets and other early poems of Mr. Bowles." The poems written under these new influences during the last years at school — a period which Coleridge characterized as "the era of poetry and love" — are the

<sup>1</sup> The Rev. James Boyer is represented by Coleridge as the incarnation of pedagogic tyranny, but he adds, "He sent us to the University excellent Latin and Greek scholars and tolerable Hebraists, yet our classical knowledge was the least of the good gifts which we derived from his zealous and conscientious tutorage." — *Biog. Lit.*, Chap. I.

<sup>2</sup> The Evanses. It was with the eldest daughter, Mary, that he fell in love.



work of a clever young versifier; they contain little hint of what was to come. It is less in his poetry than in the development of his mind and special faculties, which we have traced here at some length, that we find foreshadowed the Coleridge who wrote *The Ancient Mariner*.

From Christ's Hospital Coleridge went to Cambridge; when he entered at Jesus College he was just eighteen. For the first year or two he seems to have studied hard.<sup>1</sup> At the same time that he distinguished himself for scholarship, he gathered about himself a circle of friends, who were attracted by his singular powers of conversation. At the end of two years, Coleridge suddenly, for reasons which are not clear,<sup>2</sup> left the university. He enlisted as a dragoon, under the name of Silas Tomkyn Comberback, preserving thus his initials. One can imagine what garrison life must have been for this "logician, metaphysician, bard," who had a horror of horses, and could not even clean his accoutrements. However, he made himself useful, at least to his comrades, by nursing them when they were sick, and writing their letters. Indeed, it was his literary accomplishments, it is said, which led to the discovery of his identity. A Latin inscription he had scratched on the stable wall was seen by his captain. An inquiry followed; and, with the help of the captain and of a brother, Captain James Coleridge, the Latin-writing trooper obtained his discharge and returned to Cambridge.

But not for long. In less than two months he started with a friend for a walking trip in Wales. On his way, he stayed several weeks in Oxford; and here it was that he met Southey, then an undergraduate, the author of *Joan of*

<sup>1</sup> He won the Browne Gold Medal for a Greek Ode on the Slave Trade, and he was selected as one of four out of seventeen or eighteen to compete for the Craven Scholarship.

<sup>2</sup> Probably debts and disappointed love. He had now broken with Miss Evans.

*Arc*, and, like Coleridge, a lover of liberty. On his return from Wales, Coleridge joined Southey in Bristol. The two young poets and free-thinkers, with a few friends, devised the plan of founding, on the banks of the Susquehanna, in far America, an ideal community. Property was to be held in common. It was supposed that two or three hours a day of labor would be sufficient to support the colony; the remaining time was to be devoted to study and discussion. Each member was to enjoy perfect liberty in his religious and political opinions. Such was the scheme of "Pantisocracy." But, however ideal in aim, it needed material support. Money was not to be had, nor were the two enthusiasts able to earn sufficient, though they wrote poetry together,<sup>1</sup> and each tried lecturing. In the face of difficulties too great to be met, it is not surprising that their enthusiasm cooled, and the scheme was abandoned.

Significant as is the plan of Pantisocracy, as illustrating the bent of Coleridge's mind and his impractical nature, it was not the most important consequence of the meeting of Coleridge with Southey. To this meeting he owed his acquaintance with the woman who became his wife. One of the Pantisocratic friends, Robert Lovell, was married to a Miss Fricker, of Bristol; to her sister Edith, Southey was engaged. Coleridge was presented to the circle; and soon he engaged himself to another sister, Sarah Fricker, — perhaps to "complete the set." In October of the following year (1795) he was married at Bristol in "Chatterton's Church."

Coleridge had left the university the year before without taking his degree, refusing the required subscription to the Thirty-nine Articles. With his bride he now settled in a little cottage in the country; and here he spent several happy months. But life could not be all

<sup>1</sup> *The Fall of Robespierre*. Of this Coleridge wrote the first act, Southey the second and third. The piece found no publisher.

dreams and poetry, even for Coleridge. Bills had to be paid, and he had nothing. For the moment he laid aside his poetry and turned to a new venture, which seemed to promise a more immediate and concrete return. With a party of friends he proposed to bring out a weekly political miscellany, half review, half newspaper, to be called *The Watchman*. With his usual perversity in matters practical, he arranged to issue the paper every eighth day. This plan had for its purpose to avoid the stamp tax, but in the result, as the paper appeared on a different day each week, the arrangement proved to be "as ingeniously calculated to irritate and alienate its public, as any perhaps that the wit of man could have devised."<sup>1</sup> The canvass he took charge of in person. He set out on a tour through the North country, "preaching by the way in most of the great towns, as a hireless volunteer, in a blue coat and white waistcoat, that not a rag of the woman of Babylon might be seen on me." After many amusing adventures, characteristic of the man, he returned with nearly a thousand subscribers enrolled on his list.<sup>2</sup> In spite of this encouraging start, the paper worried through a troublous and brief existence, and expired with the tenth number from lack of support.

During the issue of *The Watchman*, Coleridge had published a volume of *Poems on Various Subjects*, which was, on the whole, favorably received by the critics. After the failure of his paper, he attempted many things, teaching, lecturing, writing for the newspaper, each venture proving fruitless. The birth of a son added to his responsibilities. It was a time of extreme worry and depression.<sup>3</sup> "Exces-

<sup>1</sup> Traill, *Coleridge*, p. 29.

<sup>2</sup> For Coleridge's account of it, see *Biog. Lit.*, Chap. X.

<sup>3</sup> Coleridge wrote in January, 1796: "My past life seems to me like a dream, a feverish dream — all one gloomy huddle of strange actions and dim-discovered motives; friendships lost by indolence, and hap-

sive anxiety" brought on a severe attack of neuralgia, to which his system was peculiarly susceptible.<sup>1</sup> For relief he resorted to laudanum. With from sixty to seventy drops he "*sopped* the Cerberus"; and this he followed with "25 drops every five hours." Here is recorded the beginning of a practice which was to become a fixed and terrible habit, — a habit from which he never freed himself entirely. To have done with the matter once for all, we may say here that without doubt Coleridge's use of opium affected his powers fundamentally. At the same time that it weakened his will, it stimulated his imagination; and to it may be due some of his inspiration in such poems as *The Ancient Mariner*, *Kubla Khan*, and *Christabel*. Obviously, we cannot measure its precise effects. We know only that before these poems were written Coleridge had begun the use of opium; it is sufficient here simply to record the fact. Speculation in the matter or any attempt to determine causes and results seems to be wholly idle.

After months of struggle and indecision, new efforts and new failures, Coleridge was enabled, by the help of a few friends, to find shelter and a home in Nether Stowey, Somersetshire. In itself, the incident seems commonplace,

piness murdered by mismanaged sensibility." And in November, 1796: "With a gloomy wantonness of imagination I had been coquetting with the hideous *possibles* of disappointment. I drank fears like wormwood, yea, made myself drunken with bitterness; for my ever-shaping and distrustful mind still mingled gall-drops, till out of the cup of hope I almost *poisoned* myself with despair."

<sup>1</sup> As a child Coleridge had run away from home to escape punishment, and had spent the night on the edge of a river. A storm came on; the boy awoke the next morning wet and cold and so stiff that he could not move. He was found and carried home; and although he escaped serious consequences, this adventure left him subject to ague for years. At school, too, he had swum across a river in his clothes; and he neglected to change; the result was a rheumatic fever, from which he suffered acutely.

but its consequences were immense. For it was here that Coleridge was brought into intimate association with Wordsworth; and from their association resulted *The Ancient Mariner*, the *Lyrical Ballads*, and a revolution in English literature. As it is the moment supremely significant in the development of Coleridge as the writer of *The Ancient Mariner*, the episode deserves a chapter by itself. To complete here the biographical sketch we may review very briefly Coleridge's life after the publication of *The Ancient Mariner* in the little volume of *Lyrical Ballads*.

Shortly after the *Lyrical Ballads* appeared, Coleridge, in company with Wordsworth and his sister, set sail for Germany. Here a year of eager study initiated him into the deep secrets of German thought, and brought him to a peculiarly penetrating and appreciative apprehension of the genius of the German people. He returned to England less of a poet, but a great critic and a trained philosopher. His poetical production after his return, though considerable in amount, is, for the most part, without distinction. It has none of the witchery of mood and surpassing felicity of phrase and rhythm which mark the work of his "poetic prime." From now on all his efforts, at best only intermittent and inconclusive, were directed to journalism, to lectures on literature, and to philosophical speculation. In the articles which he wrote for the *Morning Post*, soon after his return from Germany, he developed, according to Mr. Traill, the qualities of a first-rate journalist. His newspaper work presented the opportunity of a permanent way of life; for the publisher offered him half shares in the *Morning Post* and the *Courier*—an equivalent of two thousand pounds a year—if he would devote himself to the two papers. Coleridge's reply was characteristic: "I told him that I would not give up the country and the lazy reading of old folios for two thousand times

two thousand pound—in short that beyond 350 l. a year I considered money as a real evil.”<sup>1</sup> From journalism he turned to lecturing. In his lectures on literature, on Shakespeare and Milton, he showed himself to be a great philosophic critic. The lectures were marked by his extraordinary brilliance, and his usual waywardness and irresponsibility. Often he kept his audience waiting, and sometimes he did not appear at all. On the other hand, once he was well under way, he carried his audience, in spite of digressions, into undreamed-of regions of eloquence and poetry. “Coleridge’s audiences probably heard the finest literary criticism which has ever been given in English.”<sup>2</sup>

Yet for all these bursts of energy, flashings of the old-time fire, the story of these years is dreary indeed. It is the record of ever new struggles and certain defeat. Effort had for outcome only “Fears self-willed, that shunned the eye of hope; and hope that scarce would know itself from fear.” His life was marked by a continual flow and ebb, an assertion of will, a renewal of effort, to be followed by the inevitable collapse and predestined frustration. Coleridge’s nature was one such as is bound to prove ever inefficient; for his genius lacked the necessary reënforcement of a dominant personality: life and all its strivings left him only a—

“Sense of past youth, and manhood come in vain  
And genius given, and knowledge won in vain.”

The steady, inexorable enfeebling of his will was a part of the general breakdown of his powers. His health failed, and therewith the practice of taking opium became fixed upon him as a habit. A stay in Malta of two years and a journey through Italy brought him no relief. Returned to

<sup>1</sup> *Essays on his Own Times*, I, p. xci.

<sup>2</sup> Campbell, *Memoir*, lxxxiv.

England, he had no abiding place. He had separated from his wife and family, and he roamed about the country, finding a home with this friend and that, dependent on their hospitality and bounty. At last, rallying his forces, he determined to make a final heroic stand against opium. A home was found for him with Mr. Gillman, at Highgate, near London. Here he settled in 1816, and here he spent the eighteen years of life that remained to him.

These closing years were a time of comparative peace. Grappling with his old enemy, he succeeded in freeing himself, in a measure, from the wasting tyranny of opium. He accomplished an amount of literary work, republishing some of his earlier productions, and writing his *Literary Life*.<sup>1</sup> But most especially he gave himself over to philosophy. Here at Mr. Gillman's he gathered about himself a company of listeners and disciples, attracted by his marvellous powers of talk. With them he had, according to one of his visitors, Thomas Carlyle, "a higher than literary, a kind of prophetic or magician character." Through these young men he exerted his great influence upon religious thought in England.

It was here in his Highgate home that Coleridge died on July 25, 1834. It remains now to consider very briefly what he accomplished.

Of the work of Coleridge as a poet I shall not now attempt to speak; in studying *The Ancient Mariner* we shall have "a taste of his quality." Even with his poetry set aside, Coleridge's influence on English literature and thought is difficult to measure. To him our nineteenth-century schools of philosophic and appreciative criticism, as opposed to the dogmatism of the critics of the reviews, owe their inception and their method. In philosophy Coleridge transplanted into England the metaphysics of Kant and of

<sup>1</sup> *Biographia Literaria, or Biographical Sketches of my Literary Life and Opinions*, 1817.

the German Romantic school.<sup>1</sup> If Coleridge himself left no philosophic system, these German thinkers whom he introduced to Englishmen influenced profoundly the men who followed him. Through philosophy, Coleridge found his way back to religion. In the closing years at Highgate he gathered about himself as disciples men like Maurice, Sterling, Hare, who became leaders of English religious thought.

Obviously, a life like Coleridge's cannot be summed up in a single formula. In spite of weakness and failure, disease of body and of will, he wrought mightily, if only by what he communicated of inspiration. Even if we set apart his influence on life and thought in England, surely it is little enough to say that English literature is incalculably richer than if Coleridge had not lived. To his inestimable "magnificent beginnings" he adds at least one thing perfect, *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*.

## II. PEN PORTRAITS BY CONTEMPORARIES

That Coleridge may be a personality for us and not merely a life, let us see him "in his habit as he lived." We have only to turn to the writings of certain of his friends to find him vividly portrayed.

Let us see him first as a Bluecoat boy; here the artist is his schoolfellow, Charles Lamb.

"Come back into memory, like as thou wert in the day-spring of thy fancies, with hope like a fiery column before thee—the dark pillar not yet turned—Samuel Taylor Coleridge—Logician, Metaphysician, Bard!—How have I seen the casual passer through the Cloisters stand still, entranced with admiration (while he weighed the disproportion between the *speech* and the *garb* of the young Mirandula), to hear thee unfold, in thy deep and sweet

<sup>1</sup> Notably Fichte and Schelling, and in criticism Schlegel.



intonations, the mysteries of Jamblichus, or Plotinus (for even in those years thou waxedst not pale at such philosophic draughts), or reciting Homer in his Greek, or Pindar — while the walls of the old Grey Friars reëchoed to the accents of the *inspired charity-boy!*”<sup>1</sup>

In startling contrast with Lamb’s idealized portrait is Coleridge’s own picture of himself as a young man of twenty-four. “My face, unless when animated by immediate eloquence, expresses great sloth, and great, indeed, almost idiotic, good-nature. ’Tis a mere carcass of a face; fat, flabby, and expressive chiefly of inexpression. Yet I am told that my eyes, eyebrows, and forehead are physiologically good. . . . As to my shape, ’tis a good shape enough if measured, but my gait is awkward, and the walk of the whole man indicates *indolence capable of energies*. . . . I cannot breathe through my nose, so my mouth, with sensual, thick lips, is almost always open.”<sup>2</sup>

This we may correct, in some measure, by the description of him in a letter of Dorothy Wordsworth’s. “He is a wonderful man. His conversation teems with soul, mind, and spirit. . . . At first I thought him very plain, that is, for about three minutes. He is pale, thin, has a wide mouth, thick lips, and not very good teeth, longish, loose-growing, half-curling, rough, black hair. But if you hear him speak for five minutes you think no more of them. His eye is large and full, and not very dark, but grey, such an eye as would receive from a heavy soul the dullest expression; but it speaks every emotion of his animated mind: it has more of ‘the poet’s eye in a fine frenzy rolling’ than I have ever witnessed. He has fine dark eyebrows, and an overhanging forehead.”

Wordsworth has pictured him as —

<sup>1</sup> *Christ’s Hospital Five and Thirty Years Ago.*

<sup>2</sup> Letter to Thelwall, 19 November, 1796.

“ A noticeable Man with large grey eyes,  
 And a pale face that seemed undoubtedly  
 As if a blooming face it ought to be ;  
 Heavy his low-hung lip did oft appear,  
 Deprest by weight of musing Phantasy ;  
 Profound his forehead was, though not severe ;  
 Yet some did think that he had little business here.”<sup>1</sup>

Another interesting portrait of Coleridge at this time is that drawn by Hazlitt:<sup>2</sup> “ His forehead was broad and high, light as if built of ivory, with large projecting eyebrows, and his eyes rolling beneath them, like a sea with darkened lustre. ‘ A certain tender bloom his face o’erspread,’ a purple tinge as we see it in the pale thoughtful complexions of the Spanish portrait-painters, Murillo and Velasquez. His mouth was gross, voluptuous, open, eloquent; his chin good-humoured and round; but his nose, the rudder of the face, the index of the will, was small, feeble, nothing — like what he has done. It might seem that the genius of his face as from a height surveyed and projected him (with sufficient capacity and huge aspiration) into the world unknown of thought and imagination, with nothing to support or guide his veering purpose, as if Columbus had launched his adventurous course for the New World in a scallop, without oars or compass. So, at least, I comment on it after the event. Coleridge in his person was rather above the common size, inclining to the corpulent, or like Lord Hamlet, ‘ somewhat fat and pursy.’ His hair (now, alas! grey) was then black and glossy as the raven’s, and fell in smooth masses over his forehead.”

His portrait was painted by Washington Allston, who said of him that “ his countenance, in his high, poetic mood, was quite beyond the painter’s art, ‘ it was indeed *spirit made visible*.’ ” Of this portrait Coleridge said, “ I am not

<sup>1</sup> *Stanzas in Pocket Copy of Thomson’s “ Castle of Indolence.”*

<sup>2</sup> *My First Acquaintance with Poets.*

mortified, though I own I should like it better to be otherwise, that my face is not a manly or representable face. Whatever is impressive is part fugitive, part existent only in the imagination of persons impressed strongly by my conversation. The face itself is a feeble, unmanly face. The exceeding weakness, strengthlessness in my face, was even painful to me.”<sup>1</sup>

For a final portrait of Coleridge as he was in his later years, we must turn to one of his visitors at Mr. Gillman's, — Thomas Carlyle. We must remember that Carlyle listened to Coleridge only to be repelled by him, and that it is not a disciple and reverent biographer who is writing, but a literary artist, as irresponsible toward fact as he is trenchant in his portraiture. His object here is not truth, but effect.

“Coleridge sat on the brow of Highgate Hill, in those years, looking down on London and its smoke-tumult, like a sage escaped from the inanity of life's battle; attracting towards him the thoughts of innumerable brave souls still engaged there. His express contributions to poetry, philosophy, or any specific province of human literature or enlightenment, had been small and sadly intermittent; but he had, especially among young, inquiring men a higher than literary, a kind of prophetic or magician character. . . . The practical intellects of the world did not much heed him, or carelessly reckoned him a metaphysical dreamer: but to the rising spirits of the young generation he had this dusky sublime character; and sat there as a kind of Magus, girt in mystery and enigma; his Dodona oak grove (Mr. Gillman's house at Highgate) whispering strange things, uncertain whether oracles or jargon. . . .

“The good man, he was now getting old, toward sixty perhaps; and gave you the idea of a life that had been full

<sup>1</sup> Letter, August 6, 1814. Rossetti, *Lives of Famous Poets*, p. 252.

of sufferings; a life heavy-laden, half-vanquished, still swimming painfully in seas of manifold physical and other bewilderment. Brow and head were round, and of massive weight, but the face was flabby and irresolute. The deep eyes, of a light hazel, were as full of sorrow as of inspiration; confused pain looked mildly from them, as in a kind of mild astonishment. The whole figure and air, good and amiable otherwise, might be called flabby and irresolute; expressive of weakness under possibility of strength. He hung loosely on his limbs, with knees bent, and stooping attitude; in walking, he rather shuffled than decisively stepped; and a lady once remarked, he never could fix which side of the garden walk would suit him best, but continually shifted, in corkscrew fashion, and kept trying both. A heavy-laden, high-aspiring, and surely much-suffering man. His voice, naturally soft and good, had contracted itself into a plaintive snuffle and singsong; he spoke as if preaching, — you would have said, preaching earnestly and also hopelessly the weightiest things. I still recollect his ‘object’ and ‘subject,’ terms of continual recurrence in the Kantean province; and how he sang and snuffled them into ‘om-m-mject’ and ‘sum-m-mject,’ with a kind of solemn shake or quaver, as he rolled along. No talk, in his century or in any other, could be more surprising. . . .

“To the man himself nature had given, in high measure, the seeds of a noble endowment; and to unfold it had been forbidden him. A subtle lynx-eyed intellect, tremulous, pious sensibility to all good and all beautiful; truly, a ray of empyrean light; — but embedded in such weak laxity of character, in such indolences and esuriences as had made strange work with it. Once more, the tragic story of a high endowment with an insufficient will.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Life of Sterling*, Part I., Chap. VIII. Compare what Carlyle wrote to his brother in 1824. “I have seen many curiosities; not the least of them I reckon Coleridge. . . . Figure a fat, flabby, incurvated

## III. THE COMPOSITION OF THE POEM

In the curiously multiform experience of Coleridge, the flowering time of his poetic genius is limited to a single brief period. This period students of his poetry find it possible to detach from the circumstances of his life, and they are able to consider it apart, as constituting a kind of distinct and special epoch. It was his *annus mirabilis*, his "poetic prime"; it was the period which produced *The Ancient Mariner*. And it was, also, the period of Coleridge's association with Wordsworth.

During the last year of his residence at Cambridge, where Wordsworth had taken his degree two years before Coleridge entered, the younger poet had recognized in the *Descriptive Sketches*, with its "words and images all aglow," and in spite of all its defects and unevenness, a poem of exceptional power and import. "Seldom, if ever," he wrote, "was the emergence of an original poetic genius above the literary horizon more evidently announced." In his twenty-fourth year, he met Wordsworth personally.<sup>1</sup> To Coleridge's removal to Nether Stowey in 1796, however, was due that intimacy and communion which proved in the result so immensely significant. At that time Wordsworth was living, with his sister Dorothy, at Racedown, some thirty miles from Nether Stowey. Here, in June, 1797, Coleridge paid the Wordsworths a visit. "The first thing

personage, at once short, rotund, and relaxed, with a watery mouth, a snuffy nose, a pair of strange brown, timid, yet earnest-looking eyes, a high tapering brow, and a great bush of grey hair; and you have some faint idea of Coleridge. He is a kind good soul, full of religion and affection and poetry and animal magnetism. His cardinal sin is that he wants *will*." — *Thomas Carlyle, 1795-1835*, by J. A. Froude, Volume I., p. 179.

<sup>1</sup> *Biog. Lit.*, Chap. I. Professor Legouis gives the "exact date" as between September and the 14th of November, 1795. Professor Knight says it was in the early spring of 1796.

that was read after he came," wrote Miss Wordsworth, "was William's new poem, *The Ruined Cottage*, with which he was much delighted; and after tea he repeated to us two acts and a half of his tragedy, *Osorio*. The next morning William read his tragedy, *The Borderers*." The two young men were not long in discovering how much they had in common.

The Wordsworths returned Coleridge's visit the following month, staying with him a fortnight. They were so delighted with the neighborhood of Stowey, that they removed from Racedown and settled at Alfoxden, only three miles distant from Stowey. Their principal inducement, according to Dorothy, was Coleridge's society.

Two men more widely different in temperament than the austere, simple, Northern poet of the mountains and of humble life, and the Southern dreamer of strange dreams, it is difficult to conceive; yet their intercourse at this period, as shortly afterward their association in the composition of the *Lyrical Ballads*, has in it something wholly logical, if not inevitable. Coleridge had been attracted to Wordsworth when he had known him only through his poetry. From the very beginning of their acquaintance, the two young poets felt themselves powerfully drawn to each other. Wordsworth acknowledged the fascination the younger man exercised upon him in removing to Alfoxden to enjoy his society. Speaking of Coleridge, a few days after his death, he "called him the most *wonderful* man that he had ever known."<sup>1</sup> Coleridge, in his turn, was equally enthusiastic and more expressive. He wrote to a friend, "I speak with heartfelt sincerity and, I think, unblinded judgment, when I tell you that I feel a little man by his side." Again, "The Giant Wordsworth — God love him! when I speak in the terms of admiration due to his intellect, I fear lest these

<sup>1</sup> Prose Works, Ed. Grossart, III. 469.

terms should keep out of sight the amiableness of his manners. He has written near twelve hundred lines of blank verse, superior, I hesitate not to aver, to anything in our language which anyway resembles it." And ten years later he said of Wordsworth, "He is one, whom God knows, I love and honour as far beyond myself, as both morally and intellectually he is above me." When two men like Wordsworth and Coleridge meet on terms of such thoroughgoing mutual esteem, friendship becomes inevitable.<sup>1</sup>

And their association, as I have said, was wholly logical. For by reason of their very difference of character and temperament, they supplemented and reënforced each other. Wordsworth was upright, tenacious, uncompromising; sensitive to the "power of the hills," he had something of the elevation and isolation of a mountain peak. Contrasted with Wordsworth's splendid poise is Coleridge's greater flexibility; he was more supple, more brilliant, more versatile; a man of emotional extremes, infirm of purpose, and weak-willed.<sup>2</sup> This last trait he was wholly unable to struggle against successfully; and its existence he frankly recognized. "Indeed, I want firmness," he exclaims in a letter; "I perceive I do." Long before he had measured himself with Wordsworth, he wrote: —

<sup>1</sup> For Wordsworth's account of their association see *Stanzas Written in my Pocket Copy of Thomson's "Castle of Indolence."*

<sup>2</sup> Hazlitt says: "I observed that he continually crossed me on the way by shifting from one side of the footpath to the other. This struck me as an odd movement; but I did not at that time connect it with any instability of purpose or involuntary change of principle, as I have done since. He seemed unable to keep on in a straight line." Again: "Coleridge has told me that he himself liked to compose in walking over uneven ground, or breaking through the straggling branches of a copse-wood; whereas Wordsworth always wrote (if he could) walking up and down a straight gravel walk, or in some spot where the continuity of his verse met with no collateral interruption."

“To me hath Heaven with bounteous hand assigned  
Energic Reason and a shaping mind,  
The daring ken of Truth, the Patriot’s part,  
And Pity’s sigh, that breathes the gentle heart —  
Sloth-jaundiced all! and from my graspless hand  
Drop Friendship’s precious pearls, like hour-glass sand.  
I weep, yet stoop not! the faint anguish flows,  
A dreamy pang in Morning’s feverish doze.”

On such a nature the influence of Wordsworth’s sustained calm was tonic and energizing.

During this year among the Quantock hills the two poets were much together. They read their verses to each other; they talked about poetry. Their discussions turned frequently upon poetry in two aspects. Poetry may, in its first aspect, appeal to the sympathy of the reader by keeping close to the truth of nature, by presenting a faithful transcript of the world as we know it. To such an appeal — and this is the second aspect — may be added the interest of novelty, — a novelty evoked by seeing things through the modifying colors of the imagination. So it is not altogether the actual world of immediate and concrete fact, the world we see and touch, which may furnish the stuff of poetry; but rather a world transformed by the shaping power of the imagination. For just as a known and familiar landscape may gain a sudden charm when, in the moonlight or at sunset, its contours are modified by the accidents of light and shade, so the world as we know it day by day, when seen imaginatively, may take on fresh beauty, may express a deeper significance. Here, then, is the domain of poetry, where the familiar and the novel meet and fuse to result in a higher reality. This higher reality both Wordsworth and Coleridge propose to embody in their poetry; this common ground they are ultimately to reach. Yet they start from points diametrically opposite. Wordsworth is to choose his subjects from ordinary



life. Seeing imaginatively these familiar and unadorned characters and incidents, reading deep into their inner meaning, he draws from them new significance. By this penetrative power he gives to the truth of nature the charm of novelty. He pierces the film of familiarity, rouses men from the lethargy of custom, and quickens them to perceive the loveliness and the wonders of the world about them. Thus, with the things of everyday life as his point of departure, he excites a feeling analogous to the supernatural. With Coleridge, on the other hand, the supernatural is the starting-point; in the world which he is to call up for us the incidents and actors are unreal. Yet just as in Wordsworth's world of natural truth we spiritualize common things and find in them new and immaterial powers and import, so here these supernatural incidents and actors which Coleridge conjures up we are, by the exercise of our "poetic faith," to consider real. Suspending all disbelief for the moment, we must transfer from our inward nature to "these shadows of imagination" a human interest and a semblance of truth. Or, in simpler terms: the poet is able, by the exercise of imagination and the magic of verse, to call up a scene and to people it with beings who act. All this we *know* to be unreal as we *know* a stage-play to be unreal; but the poem or the play appeals, not to our intellects, but to our imagination. We lay aside what we know, and yield to what we see and feel. The imagination, although acting apart from practical life, has a reality of its own. So it is that the poet transports us to a different order of existence, which, for the moment, seems real; just as in sleep we do not question the actuality of dreams. It was with these principles in mind that Coleridge set about the composition of *The Ancient Mariner*.<sup>1</sup>

Not all the hours, however, which Coleridge and Words-

<sup>1</sup> For Coleridge's account of the matter, see Appendix A.

worth spent together were given over to discussion. At the same time that they debated theories and principles, they came very close to nature. They lived much out of doors; they took long rambles among the hills. One autumn afternoon the two poets, with Dorothy Wordsworth, started from Alfoxden on a walking trip, to be gone several days. They had not much money: and to meet the expenses of the excursion the friends agreed to write a poem, to be sent to the *New Monthly Magazine*. In the course of the walk they planned their poem. The starting-point was suggested by Coleridge. A friend of his had had a strange dream, in which he fancied that he saw a skeleton ship with figures in it. This situation Coleridge elaborated by force of his own invention. Wordsworth, as his share in the work, suggested that some crime be committed, which should bring upon the Mariner the spectral persecution, as a consequence of that crime and his own wanderings. Only a day or two before, Wordsworth had been reading an old book of travel in which the author recounted that while doubling Cape Horn, they frequently saw albatrosses, — huge sea-birds; with wings twelve or thirteen feet in extent. Wordsworth proposed, accordingly, that the Mariner should be represented as having killed one of these birds, on entering the South Seas, and that the protecting spirits of these regions should be made to avenge the crime. He further suggested that the ship be navigated by dead men. The same evening, then, the friends began the composition. Wordsworth furnished a few lines;<sup>1</sup> but the collaborators had not gone far, before they discovered that their respective

<sup>1</sup> “And thou art long, and lank, and brown,  
As is the ribbed sea-sand.”

“He holds him with his glittering eye, —  
The wedding guest stood still,  
And listens like a three years child,  
The Mariner hath his will.”

manners were widely different. Accordingly, Wordsworth withdrew, leaving Coleridge to complete the poem alone.<sup>1</sup> Under his touch *The Ancient Mariner* took shape, until it became too important for their immediate object, which was limited, Wordsworth tells us, to five pounds. Instead, they began to plan a volume, which was to consist of poems chiefly on supernatural subjects. This volume was the *Lyrical Ballads*, in which the first poem was *The Ancient Mariner*.<sup>2</sup>

#### IV. THE ANTECEDENTS OF THE POEM

Such is substantially the genesis of *The Ancient Mariner*, as recounted by Wordsworth and by Coleridge. Stated here, however, are only the external circumstances of its composition and its more material components. In its

<sup>1</sup> It is interesting to note that the collaboration on *The Ancient Mariner* was not the first attempt of the two young poets to compose together. In the prefatory note to the *Wanderings of Cain*, Coleridge says: "The work was to have been written in concert with another [Wordsworth], whose name is too venerable within the precincts of genius to be unnecessarily brought into connection with such a trifle, and who was then residing at a small distance from Nether Stowey. The title and subject were suggested by myself, who likewise drew out the scheme and the contents for each of the three books, or cantos, of which the work was to consist, and which, the reader is to be informed, was to have been finished in one night! My partner undertook the first canto: I the second: and whichever had *done first* was to set about the third. . . . Methinks I see his grand and noble countenance, as at the moment when having despatched my own portion of the task at full finger-speed, I hastened to him with my manuscript—that look of humorous despondency fixed on his almost blank sheet of paper, and then its silent, mock piteous admission of failure, struggling with the sense of the exceeding ridiculousness of the whole scheme—which broke up in a laugh: and the *Ancient Mariner* was written instead."

<sup>2</sup> For Wordsworth's account of the composition of *The Ancient Mariner*, see Appendix A.

essence, the poem combines elements more subtle and less immediate than are here set down, — elements brought from afar. For the poem is the expression of Coleridge's special habit of mind, temperament, genius; and, further, it gathers up into itself certain tendencies and forces active in the national life of the time.

All literature, we must remember, is the expression of the thought and feeling, not only of an individual, but of a people and of an age. No error is more easy for those who are beginning the study of literature, or more fatal to a just understanding of what literature is, than the tendency to regard a given novel, or essay, or poem, the work of a man in any department, as merely an isolated phenomenon, wholly detached and unrelated. *The Ancient Mariner*, by way of example, is not a total and immediate creation, sprung full-formed from the poet's brain; it is rather the crystallization — under the workings of the poet's transfiguring imagination and formative power of utterance — of elements already existing and held in solution. It unites in itself strivings, motives, tendencies, operative in the national life. These components we can in some measure trace in the finished product. But the process of transmutation itself baffles us. *How* the poet takes these elements into himself and gives them out something new, original, divine, we do not know. There is a point beyond which our analysis cannot go. Recognizing, then, this limitation, and, accordingly, not seeking to do too much, we find an examination into these elements, the material itself of the poem, useful and illuminating.

We have seen what concrete incidents went into the composition of *The Ancient Mariner*. The more general tendencies and forces at work in the age we can here only suggest without hoping to define comprehensively. Published in 1798, the *Lyrical Ballads* fall within the limits of the eighteenth century. These poems, then, are the product

of an age which Matthew Arnold has characterized as pre-eminently an age of prose and reason. Yet what could be less prosaic, what could concern itself less with reason, than *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*? Indeed, the *Lyrical Ballads*, of which Coleridge's poem formed a part, usher in a new age, and herald the poetical renaissance, the nineteenth century. This new order of poetry, coming thus at the end of the earlier age, is the outcome of certain forces of change which were at work far back within the eighteenth century itself.

When Matthew Arnold speaks of the century as the age of prose and reason, he means his formula to apply rather to its earlier years. The first quarter of the century was dominated by that literary ideal of which the type and representative is Pope. It was a period of many-sided yet concentrated activities: the coffee-house and the salon were the stage on which was enacted the little drama of existence. Men's faces were set away from nature; indeed, so far from imagining a possible mystical meaning in nature, — as do the poets of the nineteenth century, — the men of this time were repelled by even her mere external manifestations. Mountains, for example, which have found voice for all time in the poetry of Wordsworth, were looked upon as "excrescences of nature." In the lives of such men the imagination had no place; the free play of natural feelings was regarded with distrust. With us the worship of nature and the apotheosis of the individual, with his sensations, his moods, his deeper emotions, are commonplaces; we take them for granted. We have only, however, to contrast our attitude to-day toward nature and toward human emotion with the eighteenth-century way of feeling to realize how great was the revolution in which a leading part was played by the *Lyrical Ballads*.

As the range of ideas to be expressed in poetry was limited, so the form of expression was narrowly circum-

scribed.<sup>1</sup> Instead of that assertion of the poet's own individuality which we value to-day, the expression of his special personality, in the manner as well as in the matter, the men of Pope's age aimed at an absolute correctness, a perfect conformity to rule and measure. Order and symmetry were the qualities to be sought; and these found embodiment in the so-called heroic couplet, two verses of ten syllables each, and rimed. This form Pope brought to the highest point of perfection; with Pope the manner was supported by the matter, the form was reënforced by the content. The couplet itself, however, was easy of manufacture; and when everybody took to writing verses, mere words came to be substituted for ideas, and, in the hands of Pope's imitators, poetry became a lifeless convention, effete and meaningless.<sup>2</sup> These facts we must remember, by way of contrast, if we are to appreciate to the full the mysterious music of *The Ancient Mariner*.

The second quarter of the eighteenth century witnessed the beginnings of the change. Nature was, in some sense,

<sup>1</sup> "I saw that the excellence of this kind [of poetry] consisted in the just and acute observations on men and manners in an artificial state of society, as its matter and substance, and in the logic of wit conveyed in smooth and strong epigrammatic couplets as its form. . . . Meantime the matter and diction seemed to me characterized not so much by poetic thoughts as by thoughts translated into the language of poetry." — *Biog. Lit.*, Chap. I.

<sup>2</sup> See Wordsworth, Appendix to Preface of second edition of *Lyrical Ballads*, "On Poetic Diction." Compare Keats: —

"But ye were dead  
To things ye knew not of, — were closely wed  
To musty laws lined out with wretched rule  
And compass vile: so that ye taught a school  
Of dolts to smooth, inlay, and clip, and fit,  
Till, like the certain wands of Jacob's wit,  
Their verses tallied. Easy was the task:  
A thousand handicraftsmen wore the mask  
Of Poesy." — *Sleep and Poetry*.

rediscovered by the author of the *Seasons*.<sup>1</sup> With Thomson the reaction against contemporary standards, as regards his choice of subject, was supported by a reaction in form. Abandoning the conventional couplet, he adopted the blank verse of Milton, thus pointing the way for a return to earlier and fresher models of poetic style.

The reform begun by Thomson was advanced by Joseph and Thomas Warton, by Collins and Gray, by Cowper, Burns, and William Blake, until the rediscovery of nature and the return to the simple language of men were consummated by Wordsworth, in whom nature found her supreme interpreter. This impulse toward a new order of poetry was communicated to Coleridge more immediately by the work of W. L. Bowles. Correcting his early extravagances of diction and exaggerated feeling, Bowles' poetry brought him to simplicity of style and a just sympathy with nature.

The second great movement in the eighteenth century which affected more directly the author of *The Ancient Mariner* was the revival of the past. The third quarter of the century was well under way, when all Europe was stirred by the emergence of a strange kind of poetry, new to the age and yet, as it seemed, centuries old. This was the *Fragments of Ancient Poetry collected in the Highlands of Scotland and translated from the Gaelic or Erse language*. Actually composed by the pretended translator, Macpherson, these fragments, followed by the epic poems of *Fingal* and *Temora*, were accepted by the age as the poetry of an ancient Scotch bard, Ossian, son of the hero Fingal. Genuine or not, they roused men to an absorbing interest in the literature of earlier times. A few years after the publication of the Ossian poems, the taste for the older literature was further stimulated by the *Rowley Poems*, written by the boy Chatterton, in Bristol, and given to the world as the work

<sup>1</sup> James Thomson, 1700-1748. His first poem, *Winter*, was published in 1726.

of a monk of the fifteenth century. Chief among these manifestations of a revival of interest in the past in their influence on *The Ancient Mariner*, was the publication, in 1765, by Dr. Thomas Percy, of a manuscript collection of ballads. This return to an older and almost forgotten literature laid hold powerfully on men's imaginations. Dominated by convention and rule, the men of the eighteenth century found in the simplicity of diction, the truth to nature, the freedom and swing of these old ballads, a new note. These songs and stories, tales in verse, the veritable literature of the people, sprung from unknown parentage, and passing from lip to lip, or preserved on "flying leaves," had been excluded from the company of the more elegant, polite "town-poetry" of the wits; and such notice as they received at the hands of Addison, Rowe, Parnell, Tickell, and Prior, awakened only a passing interest. It was not until the publication of Percy's *Reliques*, that men awoke to a real appreciation of these old songs, and were deeply and permanently stirred.

The influence of this revival of ballad literature on the authors of the *Lyrical Ballads*, it is not difficult to trace. Of Percy's collection, Wordsworth said that English poetry had been "absolutely redeemed by it. I do not think that there is an able writer in verse of the present day who would not be proud to acknowledge his obligations to the *Reliques*; I know it is so with my friends; and for myself, I am happy in this occasion to make a public avowal of my own." On Coleridge's poetry, the influence of the English ballads, though equally powerful, is less direct. In the *Biographia Literaria* Coleridge refers to Percy's service to English literature, without attempting to determine the precise influence of the *Reliques* upon himself. Wordsworth tells us that *The Ancient Mariner* was "professedly written in imitation of the *style*, as well as of the spirit of the elder poets." The impulse from the *Reliques* was communicated



to Coleridge in curiously roundabout fashion. The fame of Percy's book passed over into Germany. These English ballads inspired the young poet Bürger to write the ballad of *Lenore*. The ballad took Germany by storm, and crossed into England. Here a translation by William Taylor was published in 1796, in the *New Monthly Magazine*, the periodical for which Coleridge originally destined *The Ancient Mariner*. It is highly probable, if not certain, that Coleridge caught some of his inspiration from Bürger's poem;<sup>1</sup> and he adopted suggestions from *Lenore* for *The Ancient Mariner*.<sup>2</sup> More significant than Bürger's influence, however, is the fact that by 1798 the ballad form was, so to speak, in the air; men were by this time accustomed to it, sensitive to its qualities, susceptible to its appeal. Wordsworth employed it in a number of the poems in the *Lyrical Ballads* (the name of the volume is noteworthy). Coleridge's use of the ballad form, then, in *The Ancient Mariner* was not a startling innovation. People were ready to receive it, and it was thus made possible by what had gone before.

One other movement in the eighteenth century with which *The Ancient Mariner* was in some measure related, remains to be mentioned very briefly. The poem plays a part in what has been very happily named the "Renaissance of Wonder." The same decade which saw the publication of Ossian, of Percy's *Reliques*, and produced Chatterton's *Rowley Poems* brought forth a novel destined to institute a "school" and to create for its kind a special and widespread taste. This was Horace Walpole's *Castle of Otranto* (1764), a story constructed out of supernatural elements. "The

<sup>1</sup> Charles Lamb, writing to Coleridge in 1796, exclaimed, "Have you read the ballad called *Lenora* in the second number of the *Monthly Magazine*? If you have ! ! ! !"

<sup>2</sup> Coleridge makes the vessel go "down like lead," like the horse in the wild hunt in *Lenore*. Brandl, p. 201. Cf. also *ibid.*, p. 203.

mountainous helmet, with its waving sable plumes, which crashes down into the courtyard of the Castle of Otranto at the very beginning of the narrative, unheralded and unexplained, may be taken as a symbol and type of the suddenness with which supernatural terror was reintroduced into English fiction by Horace Walpole.”<sup>1</sup> The wave of supernaturalism here set in motion rolled on through the century, gathering volume as it moved; it was given new impetus and weight by the prodigiously successful novels of Mrs. Anne Radcliffe; to it contributed Bürger’s ballad, *Lenore*. This ballad, which influenced Coleridge, as we have seen, and, afterward, Wordsworth, Shelley, and Keats,<sup>2</sup> found a translator in Sir Walter Scott. Indeed, Scott’s service to the movement did not end here, for he contributed several pieces to the collection of marvellous ballads brought out by “Monk” Lewis as *Tales of Wonder* (1801). In the Renaissance of Wonder a prominent part is played by Coleridge’s poem.

*The Ancient Mariner*, then, is in part the outcome of tendencies and forces at work in the age. Greater freedom and range in form, a regained simplicity of diction, an entrance into new realms of action and of feeling, — these characteristics are what the poem owes, in some measure, to its antecedents. Yet it is not enough to see in *The Ancient Mariner* simply one expression of a great movement; nor, again, is the poem merely a combination in new form of certain clearly defined elements, such as a dream and an episode borrowed from a book of voyages. In it we must further trace, in so far as analysis can help us, the working of the poet’s imagination. Wherein is the poem made possible by his special temperament? And is there in his poetry which preceded *The Ancient Mariner* any hint of what was to come?

<sup>1</sup> Walter Raleigh, *The English Novel*, p. 223.

<sup>2</sup> See A. Brandl’s Note on *Lenore in England* in Erich Schmidt’s *Charakteristiken*, Essay on Bürger’s *Lenore*.

The study of Coleridge's life shows him to have been preëminently a dreamer; the only real life for him was the life lived in the imagination. Curiously enough, however, his temperament finds almost no expression in his poetry. His earlier verse is unimaginative, and gives singularly little promise of *The Ancient Mariner*. The poems in his first published volume (1796) are marked by a "general turgidness of diction." His work is chiefly imitative. In his Christ's Hospital days he writes verses in the eighteenth-century pseudo-classic manner.<sup>1</sup> Then he takes to imitating Bowles. In the work produced at Cambridge we have reminiscences of Milton and Gray.<sup>2</sup> It is an extraordinary fact in the poetical history of this extraordinary man that his genius burst at once into full flower. In this sudden unfolding of his powers it is certain that his association with Wordsworth counted for very much. Furthermore, at the opening of this period of imaginative poetical production, Coleridge began the practice of taking opium. The measure of these two influences, however, — the association with Wordsworth and the use of opium — cannot be determined precisely. We must content ourselves simply with noting the facts. The investigation which helped us to appreciate in part the poet's transmuting power here fails. We have no data on which to base exact conclusions; and analysis carried into the domain of speculation and guess-work, however interesting it may be, has no scientific value. At this point, then, we may leave our study of sources and turn to the poem itself.

## V. THE FORM OF THE POEM

In *The Ancient Mariner* we recognize a special kind of poem; and when Wordsworth tells us that it was "pro-

<sup>1</sup> *Julia*, *Destruction of the Bastile*, *Progress of Vice*, etc.

<sup>2</sup> *A Wish*, *Song of the Pixies*, *Lines on an Autumnal Evening*, etc.

fessedly written in imitation of the *style*, as well as of the spirit of the elder poets," he gives us a clue to its precise form. *The Ancient Mariner* is a ballad. As a ballad, then, we must regard it if we are to appreciate it rightly. In order to enter into its spirit and fully understand its form, let us turn for a moment to its prototype, the traditional "popular ballad" of the earlier age.

A ballad is defined as a "narrative song, a short tale in lyric verse."<sup>1</sup> In its primitive form, it was sung as the accompaniment to a dance; a repetition of the dance movement was accompanied by the refrain; further, the ballad was often extended by improvisation. The ballad, then, was intended to be sung or chanted, although to-day we are content simply to recite it.<sup>2</sup> It has no single fixed form; it is not the work of any one man. Rather it is a growth. Illustrative of the "communal" character of the ballads is the fact that they have come down to us anonymous. Preceding the poetry of art, they are the expression of the spirit of the people as a whole, never of the personality of an individual.

As distinctively the poetry of the people, enjoyed by all classes, these old narrative songs, "canticles of love and woe," are characterized by an elemental simplicity and immediateness. The narrative receives no coloring from the mood and emotions of any individual poet; the passions portrayed are those common to mankind. The breadth and strength of feeling, the largeness of movement, find fit expression; for this objectivity of presentation, this directness in the march of the story, is sustained by a verse-form of great simplicity and flexibility.

The ballads are composed in stanzas of free form, stanzas of two, four, five, six, or even more lines. These lines, or

<sup>1</sup> Professor F. J. Child, in Johnson's *Cyclopædia*, article "Ballads."

<sup>2</sup> It is interesting to notice that Hazlitt records that both Wordsworth and Coleridge recited poetry with a kind of "chaunt."

verses, are not measured off according to the precise number of syllables, as in the heroic couplet, in blank verse, or in such stanzas, for example, as Gray uses for his *Elegy*; instead, the metre is determined by the number of stresses or accented syllables. Of the unaccented syllables there may be more than one in each foot, as is not the case with the strict iambic verse, represented by Gray's *Elegy*:—

“The  $\cup$   $\swarrow$  cur | few  $\cup$   $\swarrow$  tolls | the  $\cup$   $\swarrow$  knell | of  $\cup$   $\swarrow$  part | ing  $\cup$   $\swarrow$  day,  
 The  $\cup$   $\swarrow$  low | ing  $\cup$   $\swarrow$  herd | winds  $\cup$   $\swarrow$  slow | ly  $\cup$   $\swarrow$  o'er | the  $\cup$   $\swarrow$  lea,  
 The  $\cup$   $\swarrow$  plow | man  $\cup$   $\swarrow$  home | ward  $\cup$   $\swarrow$  plods | his  $\cup$   $\swarrow$  wear | y  $\cup$   $\swarrow$  way,  
 And  $\cup$   $\swarrow$  leaves | the  $\cup$   $\swarrow$  world | to  $\cup$   $\swarrow$  dark | ness  $\cup$   $\swarrow$  and | to  $\cup$   $\swarrow$  me.”

The metre here is strictly iambic: each foot contains but two syllables; and in each foot the accent, or stress, falls on the second syllable. With this contrast the following stanza from the ballad of *Fair Margaret and Sweet William*:

“As  $\cup$   $\swarrow$  it | fell  $\cup$   $\swarrow$  out | on  $\cup$   $\swarrow$  a long | summer's  $\cup$   $\swarrow$  day,  
 Two  $\cup$   $\swarrow$  lov | ers  $\cup$   $\swarrow$  they sat | on  $\cup$   $\swarrow$  a hill;  
 They  $\cup$   $\swarrow$  sat | togeth | er  $\cup$   $\swarrow$  that long | summer's  $\cup$   $\swarrow$  day,  
 And  $\cup$   $\swarrow$  could | not  $\cup$   $\swarrow$  talk | their  $\cup$   $\swarrow$  fill.”

In place of the absolute regularity of Gray's measure, we have here in the first verse and in the third two feet out of the four which contain more than two syllables. The basis of this metre, then, is not number of syllables, but stress.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> What Coleridge says of the metre of *Christabel* applies equally to the ballad measure. “The metre of the *Christabel* is not, properly speaking, irregular, though it may seem so from its being founded on a new principle: namely, that of counting in each line the accents, not

We need not at this point analyze the ballad metre in its details, classifying all the variations it admits on the iambic line and all the variations possible in the make-up of the stanza.<sup>1</sup> It is enough to note that the metrical form of the ballad is characterized by freedom. This freedom lends to the march of the story that swiftness of movement essential to narrative; and the flexibility of this free measure makes possible an infinite variety of effect.<sup>2</sup>

Such is the poetry, the style and spirit of which Coleridge aimed to catch and reproduce in *The Ancient Mariner*. How far has he succeeded? First of all, for the instinctive rightness of the old ballads we must reckon with the substitution by Coleridge of skilled work; with the unconscious poetry of these songs of the people, we must contrast his awareness of certain effects to be produced definitely and consciously, and his ability knowingly to produce them.

the syllables. Though the latter may vary from seven to twelve, yet in each line the accents will be found to be only four. Nevertheless this occasional variation in number of syllables is not introduced wantonly, or for the mere ends of convenience, but in correspondence with some transition, in the nature of the imagery or passion." The principle Coleridge here lays down, although unfamiliar to the eighteenth century with its rigid "correctness" in verse, was not really new. The "four-stress" measure is the verse-form of Anglo-Saxon poetry, which is scanned according to stress and not at all according to the number of syllables; and four-stressed verse is found throughout the range of English poetry. Browning, for example, uses it in *How they brought the Good News from Ghent to Aix*:—

"I sprang to the stirrup, and Joris, and he;  
I galloped, Dirck galloped, we galloped all three;  
'Good speed!' cried the watch, as the gate-bolts undrew;  
'Speed!' echoed the wall to us galloping through."

<sup>1</sup> The details of scansion are discussed in the notes on the poem.

<sup>2</sup> For a thorough-going study of the ballads, the student should consult Professor Gummere's *Old English Ballads*, and Professor Beers' *History of English Romanticism*, Chapter VIII. For ballad influence on Coleridge, see Brandl, pp. 117, 203 ff.

Secondly, for the elemental simplicity of emotion of primitive folk, we have here portrayed the frenzy, the soul-crises, of a man possessed. Blind fate, taking form in spirits and powers, manifests a demonic activity; destiny fulfils itself through the agency of spectral persecution. Working thus in the intention rather than with the material of the old ballads, Coleridge by his magic transports us into another world. Once we grant him his conditions, suspending there-with our disbelief by the exercise of "poetic faith," then, as at a play or in sleep, everything follows naturally and convincingly. For just as the play is the significant and vital reality at the theatre, and dreams furnish us the reality of sleep, so, in the supernatural world, the supernatural is the natural.

In form, Coleridge avails himself of all the capabilities of his instrument. The old ballads work by their very artlessness; their sincerity is so real; not a false note impairs their rude strength of utterance. While losing none of its largeness and freedom of mood and movement, the measure is brought under control by Coleridge, who with supreme art does not weaken in refining it. Master of his instrument, he uses it with that ultimate skill which conceals itself to draw from it its subtlest harmonies. But the work of appreciation I leave to the critics of the poem.

## VI. JUDGMENTS AND APPRECIATIONS

It is difficult for us — inheritors as we are of all the poetry of the nineteenth century — to realize that *The Ancient Mariner*, and with it the *Lyrical Ballads*, were received by the critics with ridicule and abuse. Even Southey, himself a poet and a Liberal, and the personal friend of Wordsworth and Coleridge, reviewed the volume in a narrow and carping spirit. In the *Critical Review* for September, 1798, he wrote:<sup>1</sup> —

<sup>1</sup> For Lamb's reply to Southey's criticism, see *post*, p. 40.

“In a very different style of poetry [from the other poems in the *Lyrical Ballads*], is the Rime of the Ancyent Marinere; a ballad (says the advertisement) ‘professedly written in imitation of the *style*, as well as of the spirit of the elder poets.’ We are tolerably conversant with the early English poets; and can discover no resemblance whatever, except in antiquated spelling and a few obsolete words. This piece appears to us perfectly original in style as well as in story. Many of the stanzas are laboriously beautiful; but in connection they are absurd or unintelligible. . . . We do not sufficiently understand the story to analyse it. It is a Dutch attempt at German sublimity. Genius has here been employed in producing a poem of little merit.”

Quite as unintelligent and impercipient as Southey’s review was the criticism in the *Monthly Review* for June, 1799.

“Though we have been extremely entertained with the fancy, the facility, and (in general) the sentiments, of these pieces, we cannot regard them as *poetry*, of a class to be cultivated at the expence of a higher species of versification, unknown in our language at the time when our elder writers, whom this author condescends to imitate, wrote their ballads. — Would it not be degrading poetry, as well as the English language, to go back to the barbarous and uncouth numbers of Chaucer? Suppose, instead of modernizing the old bard, that the sweet and polished measures, on lofty subjects, of Dryden, Pope, and Gray, were to be transmuted into the dialect and versification of the *xivth* century? Should we be gainers by the retrogradation? . . . We have had pleasure in reading the *reliques of antient poetry*, because it was antient; and because we were surprised to find so many beautiful thoughts in the rude numbers of barbarous times. These reasons will not apply to *imitations* of antique versification. . . . The author’s first piece, *The Rime of the ancyent marinere*, . . . is the



strangest story of a cock and a bull that we ever saw on paper: yet, though it seems a rhapsody of unintelligible wildness and incoherence, (of which we do not perceive the drift, unless the joke lies in depriving the wedding guest of his share of the feast,) there are in it poetical touches of an exquisite kind."

Even Wordsworth failed to perceive the higher qualities of *The Ancient Mariner*. In the second edition of the *Lyrical Ballads* he printed the following superior and obtuse note:—

"The Author was himself very desirous that it should be suppressed. This wish had arisen from a consciousness of the defects of the Poem, and from a knowledge that many persons had been much displeased with it. The Poem of my Friend has indeed many great defects; first, that the principal person has no distinct character, either in his profession of Mariner, or as a human being who having been long under the controul of supernatural impressions might be supposed himself to partake of something supernatural: secondly, that he does not act, but is constantly acted upon: thirdly, that the events having no necessary connection do not produce each other; and lastly, that the imagery is somewhat too laboriously accumulated. Yet the Poem contains many delicate touches of passion, and indeed the passion is everywhere true to nature; a great number of the stanzas present beautiful images, and are expressed with unusual felicity of language; and the versification, tho' the metre is in itself unfit for long poems, is harmonious and artfully varied, exhibiting the utmost powers of that metre, and every variety of which it is capable. It therefore appeared to me that these several merits (the first of which, namely, that of the passion, is of the highest kind) gave to the Poem a value which is not often possessed by better Poems. On this account I requested of my Friend to permit me to republish it."

In challenge of this Note, Lamb wrote to Wordsworth, January, 1801:—

“For me, I was never so affected with any human tale. After first reading it, I was totally possessed with it for many days. I dislike all the miraculous part of it; but the feelings of the man under the operation of such scenery, dragged me along like Tom Pipe’s magic whistle. I totally differ from your idea that the *Marinere* should have had a character and profession. This is a beauty in *Gulliver’s Travels*, where the mind is kept in a placid state of little wonderments; but the *Ancient Marinere* undergoes such trials as overwhelm and bury all individuality or memory of what he was—like the state of a man in a bad dream, one terrible peculiarity of which is, that all consciousness of personality is gone. Your other observation is, I think as well, a little unfounded: the ‘Marinere,’ from being conversant in supernatural events, *has* acquired a supernatural and strange cast of *phrase*, eye, appearance, etc., which frighten the ‘wedding guest.’ You will excuse my remarks, because I am hurt and vexed that you should think it necessary, with a prose apology, to open the eyes of dead men that cannot see.”

As a striking illustration of the revolution in taste which the nineteenth century has witnessed, we need only set off against the early criticisms and judgments of the *Reviews* certain recent appreciations of *The Ancient Mariner*. Out of many, I select a few representative opinions.

“More amenable to our judgment [than *Christabel* and *Kubla Khan*], and susceptible of a more definite admiration, the ‘Ancient Mariner,’ and the few other poems cast in something of a ballad type, which we may rank around or below it, belong to another class. The chief of these is so well known that it needs no fresh comment. Only I will say that to some it may seem as though this great sea-piece might have had more in it of the air and savour

of the sea. Perhaps it is none the worse; and indeed any one speaking of so great and famous a poem must feel and know that it cannot but be right, although he or another may think it would be better if this were retrenched or that appended. And this poem is beyond question one of the supreme triumphs of poetry. . . .

“The ‘Ancient Mariner’ has doubtless more of breadth and space, more of material force and motion, than anything else of the poet’s. And the tenderness of sentiment which touches with significant colour the pure white imagination is here no longer morbid or languid, as in the earlier poems of feeling and emotion. . . . For the execution, I presume no human eye is too dull to see how perfect it is, and how high in kind of perfection. Here is not the speckless and elaborate finish which shows everywhere the fresh rasp of file or chisel on its smooth and spruce excellence; this is faultless after the fashion of a flower or a tree. Thus it has grown: not thus has it been carved.”

SWINBURNE, *Essays and Studies*: Coleridge.

“The same expectation of the possibility of marvel and horror, of mysterious sins and their forgiveness, and of the chance of meeting some forgotten spiritual life which was before man came on earth, which creeps over us as we read *The Ancient Mariner*, belongs to seamen who have been lost in unvisited spaces of ocean, vext with everlasting calm. I never met a sailor whose ship had been among the lonely places of the sea, who did not know of their hauntings, who would be surprised to see the phantom ship, who did not hear in the air that sighed in the rigging the voices of the creatures that are half of the waters and half of the air above them. With wonderful but unconscious skill Coleridge has kept this sea-poem within the limits of this subjective feeling. The supernatural in it is the translation into form of the unconscious emotions of the lonely Mariner;

but all the time, in order to actualize the poem, the scenery is kept extraordinarily true to nature. The single motive,—

“ ‘ He prayeth well who loveth well,  
Both man and bird and beast,’

is so slight that it does not take the whole out of the world of dreaming phantasy, out of the mystery of the great and solitary sea; and yet, when it comes in at the end, it throws back its single impression on the whole and gives it lyric unity.

“I believe this motive grew out of the poem as it went along, and that it did not form the previous basis of the poem. . . .

“So the poem is a revelation made by Coleridge of what he believed to be always the case in the spiritual world. That world is on the side of pity and love, and men who violate these are punished by hardness of heart. They cannot pray, they cannot be wise, they cannot bless the living creatures of the land and sea and sky. Nature to them is dead; and if there be powers bound up with Nature, these are their enemies till they change their hearts. And Coleridge imagined the lonesome Spirit of the South Pole who loved the Albatross, and his fellow-demons, the invisible inhabitants of the element, and the great Ocean that always looks at the moon, and the Sun and the Moon, who act with the Polar Spirit; and Death and Life in Death,—the spiritual powers which execute the sanctions of the Law of Pity.

“To support this atmosphere, in which the laws of the spiritual world take form as living beings, all the things of Nature mentioned in the poem are impersonated, have a life and will. The Storm Blast which drives the ship southward is as alive as the North Wind is in the Teuton’s tale. Even the ‘Dark’ itself comes like a giant with one stride over the sea. The water snakes, the creatures of the calm, are full of happiness in their own beauty. The Ocean breathes and


moves and acts like one vast spirit. The Moon and the Stars have their own being. . . .

“We are in a living world, yet as this part of the poem verges too near to the allegorical, it is so far forth removed from the mysterious in which it is conceived. To avoid this fault, the basis of the poem has a psychological mystery in it, such as Coleridge loved. The Ancient Mariner himself has a spiritual Power which enables him to know the man to whom he must tell his tale, and who must listen to him. On this mission he wanders, with strange power of speech, from land to land. This is the actual supernatural, the spiritual Power in the poem; not allegorical, not subjective. And this it is which after all gives to the poem its deepest strangeness. All the wonders are made truly spiritual by it.

As to its poetry, it is like that of *Christabel*, not to be analyzed or explained. The spirit herself of Poetry is everywhere, in these two poems, felt, but never obtruding, touching spiritual life and earthly loveliness with equal light, and so charming sense and soul with music, that what is spiritual seems sensible, and what is of the senses seems spiritual.”

STOPFORD BROOKE, *The Golden Book of Coleridge*.

“Any one examining the poem with a critical eye for its machinery and groundwork, will have noticed that Coleridge is careful not to introduce any element of the marvellous or supernatural until he has transported the reader beyond the pale of definite geographical knowledge, and thus left behind him all those conditions of the known and the familiar, all those associations with recorded fact and experience, which would have created an inimical atmosphere. Indeed, there is perhaps something rather inartistic in his undisguised haste to convey us to the æsthetically necessary region. In some half-dozen stanzas, beginning with ‘The



ship was cleared,' [*sic*] we find ourselves crossing the Line and driven far toward the Southern Pole. Beyond a few broad indications thus vouchsafed, Coleridge very astutely takes pains to avoid anything like geography. We reach that silent sea into which we are the first that ever burst, and that is sufficient for imaginative ends. It is enough that the world, as known to actual navigators, is left behind, and a world which the poet is free to colonize with the wildest children of his dreaming brain, has been entered. Forthwith, to all intents and purposes, we may say, in the words of Goethe, as rendered by Shelley:—

“ ‘ The bounds of true and false are passed ; —  
Lead us on, thou wandering gleam.’ ”

Thenceforth we cease to have any direct relations with the verifiable. Natural law is suspended; standards of probability have ceased to exist. Marvel after marvel is accepted by us, as by the Wedding-Guest, with the unquestioning faith of ‘a three years’ child.’ We become insensibly acclimatized to this dreamland. Nor is it the chaotic, anarchic, incoherent world of arabesque romance, where the real and unreal by turns arbitrarily interrupt and supplant each other, and are never reconciled at heart. On the contrary, here is no inconsistency, for with the construction of *this* dream-realm nothing except the natural and the probable could be inconsistent. Here is no danger of the intellect or the reason pronouncing an adverse judgment, for the venue has been changed to a court where the jurisdiction of fantasy is supreme. Thus far, then, the Logic of the Incredible is perfect, and the result, from the view point of art, magnificent. But at last we quit this consistently, unimpeachably, most satisfactorily impossible world; we are restored to the world of common experience; and when so restoring us, the poet makes his first and only mistake. For the concluding miracle, or rather

brace of miracles—the apparition of the angelic forms standing over the corpses of the crew, and the sudden preternatural sinking of the ship—take place just when we have returned to the province of the natural and regular, to the sphere of the actual and the known; just when, floating into harbour, we sight the well-remembered kirk on the rock, and the steady weathercock which the moonlight steeps in silentness. A dissonant note is struck at once. We have left a world where prodigies were normal, and have returned to one where they are monstrous. But prodigies still pursue us with unseasonable pertinacity, and our feeling is somewhat akin to that of the Ancient Mariner himself, whose prayer is that he may either ‘be awake’ or may ‘sleep away’ [*sic*]. We would fain either surrender unconditionally to reality, or remain free, as naturalized citizens of a self-governing dreamland.”

WILLIAM WATSON, *Excursions in Criticism*:  
Coleridge’s Supernaturalism.

“He has written some of the most poetical poetry in the language, and one poem, the ‘Ancient Mariner,’ not only unparalleled but unapproached in its kind, and that kind of the rarest. It is marvellous in its mastery over that delightfully fortuitous inconsequence that is the adamant logic of dreamland. Coleridge has taken the old ballad measure and given to it, by an indefinable charm wholly his own, all the sweetness, all the melody and compass of a symphony. And how picturesque it is in the proper sense of the word. I know nothing like it. There is not a description in it. It is all picture. ‘Descriptive poets generally confuse us with multiplicity of detail; we cannot see their forest for the trees; but Coleridge never errs in this way. With instinctive tact he touches the right chord of association, and is satisfied, as we also are. I should find it hard to explain the singular charm of his diction,

there is so much nicety of art and purpose in it, whether for music or meaning. Nor does it need any explanation, for we all feel it. The words seem common words enough, but in the order of them, in the choice, variety, and position of the vowel-sounds they become magical. The most decrepit vocable in the language throws away its crutches to dance and sing at his piping. I cannot think it a personal peculiarity, but a matter of universal experience, that more bits of Coleridge have embedded themselves in my memory than of any other poet who delighted my youth — unless I should except the sonnets of Shakespeare. This argues perfection of expression. Let me cite an example or two: —

“ ‘ The sun’s rim dips, the stars rush out,  
At one stride comes the dark ;  
With far-heard whisper through the dark [*sic*]  
Off shot the spectre barque.’

Or take this as a bit of landscape: —

“ ‘ Beneath yon birch with silver bark  
And boughs so pendulous and fair,  
The brook falls scattered down the rock,  
And all is mossy there.’

It is a perfect little picture and seems so easily done. But try to do something like it. Coleridge’s words have the unashamed nakedness of Scripture, of the Eden of diction ere the voluble serpent had entered it. This felicity of speech in Coleridge’s best verse is the more remarkable because it was an acquisition. His earlier poems are apt to be turgid, in his prose there is too often a languor of profuseness, and there are pages where he seems to be talking to himself and not to us. . . . When he is well inspired, as in his best poetry he commonly is, he gives us the very quintessence of perception, the clearly crystallized precipitation of all that is most precious in the ferment of impres-



sion after the impertinent and obtrusive particulars have evaporated from the memory. It is the pure visual ecstasy disengaged from the confused and confusing material that gave it birth. It seems the very beatitude of artless simplicity, and is the most finished product of art. I know nothing so perfect in its kind since Dante."

LOWELL, *Literary and Political Addresses*: Coleridge.

"*The Ancient Mariner*, as also, in its measure, *Christabel*, is a 'romantic' poem, impressing us by bold invention, and appealing to that taste for the supernatural, that longing for *le frisson*, a shudder, to which the 'romantic' school in Germany, and its derivations in England and France, directly ministered. In Coleridge, personally, this taste had been encouraged by his odd and out-of-the-way reading in the old-fashioned literature of the marvellous — books like Purchas's *Pilgrims*, early voyages like Hakluyt's, old naturalists and visionary moralists, like Thomas Burnet, from whom he quotes the motto of *The Ancient Mariner*, '*Facile credo, plures esse naturas invisibiles quam visibiles in rerum universitate*,' etc. Fancies of the strange things which may very well happen, even in broad daylight, to men shut up alone in ships far off on the sea, seem to have occurred to the human mind in all ages with a peculiar readiness, and often have about them, from the story of the stealing of Dionysus downwards, the fascination of a certain dreamy grace, which distinguishes them from other kinds of marvellous inventions. This sort of fascination *The Ancient Mariner* brings to its highest degree: it is the delicacy, the dreamy grace, in his presentation of the marvellous, which makes Coleridge's work so remarkable. The too palpable intruders from a spiritual world in almost all ghost literature, in Scott and Shakespeare even, have a kind of crudity or coarseness. Coleridge's power is in the very fineness with which, as by some really ghostly finger, he

brings home to our inmost sense his inventions, daring as they are — the skeleton ship, the polar spirit, the inspiriting of the dead corpses of the ship's crew. *The Rhyme of the Ancient Mariner* has the plausibility, the perfect adaptation to reason and the general aspect of life, which belongs to the marvellous, when actually presented as a part of a credible experience in our dreams. Doubtless, the mere experience of the opium-eater, the habit he must almost necessarily fall into of noting the more elusive phenomena of dreams, had something to do with that: in its essence, however, it is connected with a more purely intellectual circumstance in the development of Coleridge's poetic gift. Some one once asked William Blake, to whom Coleridge has many resemblances, when either is at his best (that whole episode of the re-inspiriting of the ship's crew in *The Ancient Mariner* being comparable to Blake's well-known design of the 'Morning Stars singing together') whether he had ever seen a ghost, and was surprised when the famous seer, who ought, one would think, to have seen so many, answered frankly, 'Only once!' His 'spirits,' at once more delicate, and so much more real, than any ghost — the burden, as they were the privilege, of his *temperament* — like it, were an integral element in his everyday life. And the difference of mood expressed in that question and its answer, is indicative of a change of temper in regard to the supernatural which has passed over the whole modern mind. . . .

"It is this finer, more delicately marvellous supernaturalism, fruit of his more delicate psychology, that Coleridge infuses into romantic adventure, itself also then a new or revived thing in English literature; and with a fineness of weird effect in *The Ancient Mariner*, unknown in those older, more simple, romantic legends and ballads. It is a flower of mediæval or later German romance, growing up in the peculiarly compounded atmosphere of modern psychological speculation, and putting forth in it wholly new qualities.

The quaint prose commentary, which runs side by side with the verse of *The Ancient Mariner*, illustrates this — a composition of quite a different shade of beauty and merit from that of the verse which it accompanies, connecting this, the chief poem of Coleridge, with his philosophy, and emphasizing therein that psychological interest of which I have spoken, its curious soul-lore. . . .

“It is Coleridge’s one great complete work, the one really finished thing, in a life of many beginnings. *Christabel* remained a fragment. In *The Ancient Mariner* this unity is secured in part by the skill with which the incidents of the marriage feast are made to break in dreamily from time to time upon the main story. And then, how pleasantly, how reassuringly, the whole nightmare story itself is made to end, among the clear fresh sounds and lights of the bay, where it began, with

“ ‘The moon-light steeped in silentness,  
The steady weather-cock.’ ”

WALTER PATER, *Appreciations*: Coleridge.

“Like a great shadow moving noiselessly over the widest sweep of mountain and plain, a pillar of cloud — or like the flight of indescribable fleecy hosts of winged vapours spreading their impalpable influence like a breath, changing the face of the earth, subduing the thoughts of men, yet nothing, and capable of no interpretation — such was the great poem destined to represent in the world of poetry the effect which these mystic cloud-agencies have upon the daylight and the sky. . . .

“When the tale has reached its height of mystery and emotion, a change ensues; gradually the greater spell is removed, the spirits depart, the strain softens — with a weird yet gentle progress the ship comes ‘slowly and smoothly,’ without a breeze, back to the known and visible.

As the voyage approaches its conclusion, ordinary instrumentalities appear once more. There is first the rising of the soft, familiar wind, 'like a meadow gale in spring,' then the blessed vision of the lighthouse-top, the hill, the kirk, all those well-known realities which gradually relieve the absorbed excitement of the listener, and favour his slow return to ordinary daylight. And then comes the ineffable, half-childish, half-divine simplicity of those soft moralizings at the end, so strangely different from the tenor of the tale, so wonderfully perfecting its visionary strain. After all, the poet seems to say, after this weird excursion into the very deepest, awful heart of the seas and mysteries, here is your child's moral, a tender little half-trivial sentiment, yet profound as the blue depths of heaven:—

“ ‘ He prayeth best, who loveth best  
All things both great and small ;  
For the dear God who loveth us,  
He made and loveth all.’ ”

“This unexpected gentle conclusion brings our feet back to the common soil with a bewildered sweetness of relief and soft quiet after the prodigious strain of mental excitement which is like nothing else we can remember in poetry. The effect is one rarely produced, and which few poets have the strength and daring to accomplish, sinking from the highest notes of spiritual music to the absolute simplicity of exhausted nature. Thus we are set down on the soft grass, in a tender bewilderment, out of the clouds. The visionary voyage is over, we are back again on the mortal soil from which we started; but never more, never again, can the visible and invisible bear to us the same meaning. For once in our lives, if never before, we have passed the borders of the unseen.”

MRS. OLIPHANT, *Literary History of England.*

## VII. SUGGESTIONS TO TEACHERS

The foregoing pages are intended, not merely to serve as an introduction to *The Ancient Mariner*, but also to embody suggestions as to method in the study of literature. Young students beginning the study of literature are apt, as is natural, to lack the sense of relation; they consider the particular poem or novel they are studying as a final and total production, quite apart from anything else, and existing in and for itself. The biography of the author is, at its best, a mere narrative of events, and at its worst, simply a string of anecdotes. And his other works are so many other literary productions, having no necessary relation to the man who wrote them or to each other. Such a conception of a novel or poem I believe to be not uncommon with young people, in spite of the fact that manifestly the outcome of any study under these conditions can be only cramping, and in the end pernicious, as leading to false methods and wrong results.

To correct the mistaken conception of the meaning of biography, I have in my sketch of Coleridge's life insisted tacitly on the importance of a clearly defined point of view. The biography of a poet becomes significant in so far as we see in the events of his life the causes or the results of his personality, his habit of mind, his temperament, his genius. The personality is the main thing; to that events are incidental, and they are significant in so far as they help us to understand the personality. For if we do not know the man, we cannot read aright the full meaning of his work. Thus, in my narrative of Coleridge's life, my choice of details has been determined in every instance by the desire to set forth the man who wrote *The Ancient Mariner*. It is the poet whom I have thrown into relief, rather than the critic, the philosopher, or the religious teacher. For it was pre-

ëminently as the dreamer that Coleridge was able to write the poem.

So, too, in approaching the study of the poem, I thought it advisable to make use of the historical method. The work of appreciation, surely not the least important part of the study of poetry, I leave to the students themselves, under the guidance of the recognized critics, whose judgments and impressions I cite. Appreciation, important as it is, is apt to be misleading and unsound, if not reënforced by a knowledge of such facts about the poem as are within our reach. These facts are supplied, first, by a thorough understanding of the man himself, as revealed in his biography, and, secondly, by a study of the sources of the poem, its antecedents, and its place in literature, — literature, that is, regarded not as the sporadic expression of this or that man's ideas, but as a continuous development. What the end of the study of literature should be, whether it should be pleasure or truth, whether the method should be impressionistic and appreciative, or dogmatic, or historical and scientific, I do not intend to discuss here. My purpose is simply, by suggesting the use of the historical method, supplemented by appreciation, to point the way to the understanding and enjoyment of literature.

The historical method I have used in its widest scope in Section IV.; and this section I have written primarily for teachers. This the pupils may omit until they are thoroughly familiar with the poem. The pupils may be asked to read Sections I. and V. before beginning the study of the poem itself. Then the poem should be read through aloud, and, if possible, at one sitting: on this first reading no attention need be paid to the notes. The poem should then be read with reference to the story; once the pupils have the narrative in mind, they may turn to Section III. to see where the poet found his narrative, and

so learn what use he made of his materials. Here the teacher may point out that in just the same way Shakespeare borrowed the plots of many of his plays. The pupils should note the difference between the crude material and the finished poem. The teacher should point out that, although we see the unfused elements on the one side and the fine gold on the other, no critical alchemy has ever discovered the process of transmutation. No one holds the "philosopher's stone" of poetry but the poet himself; it is this undiscoverable power which constitutes his genius.

After this comparison between materials and poem, the pupils should study the poem in detail with the help of the notes. Then they should be asked to give their opinions on *The Ancient Mariner*. Not until they have mastered the poem for themselves, should they be allowed to read the criticisms. One lesson that the young student of literature should learn early is to form his own independent judgment on what he reads. To borrow one's opinions before reading for oneself weakens the critical fibre and savors of intellectual dishonesty. If there is time, a good plan would be to have the pupils give their opinions of the criticisms cited, and to debate, from their own point of view, the dicta of the critics. Anything is helpful which enables young people to give the reason for their own opinion, and leads them out into intellectual independence.

After this thoroughgoing study of the poem, the introduction may be read as a whole, by way of summing up results.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> If time serves, the student should read as illustrating the other work of Coleridge's poetic prime, *Kubla Khan*, *Christabel*, *Leviti*, *Love*, *Ballad of the Dark Lady*, and for the sake of contrast with *The Ancient Mariner*, part at least of *The Three Graces*. Of his other work might be read *The Æolian Harp*, *Frost at Midnight*, *Lines to Wordsworth*, *Pains of Sleep*, and the splendid *Ode to Dejection*. To these might be added some of Wordsworth's poems in the *Lyrical Ballads*, *The Thorn*, *We are Seven*, and especially the *Lines written a few miles above Tintern Abbey*.

*The Ancient Mariner*, then, regarded from this point of view, may serve as a kind of introduction to the study of literature. One hint now as to the method of studying the poem itself. Here the end and aim should be to let the poem make its appeal as poetry. Details of scansion should be dwelt upon only in so far as they help in the right reading of the verse. Grammatical construction should not be studied for its own sake; the teacher should discuss the choice of words and the make-up of the sentences solely from the point of view of effect. What words are exact in their picture-making power, such as force us to see what the poet sees and precisely as he sees it? What words, on the other hand, are indeterminate, suggestive, stimulating our own imaginations, so that we make the picture for ourselves out of our own experience? How does the form of the verse respond to the mood it expresses? With more advanced students the teacher might analyze the music of the verse, touching upon the more general principles of "tone-color," wherein a certain higher expressiveness is won by the quality of the consonant and vowel sounds. The nature and number of such details as I have here hinted at may be safely left to the discretion of the teacher, provided that he have before him constantly the fundamental principle in the study of literature, that poetry should be read to be appreciated and enjoyed; for a poem fails of being poetry in so far as it fails of communicating pleasure.

### VIII. EXAMINATION QUESTIONS

1. Tell briefly the entire story of the *The Ancient Mariner*.
2. Relate in full one of the following episodes: —
  - a. The mariner and the wedding-guest.
  - b. The voyage until the albatross appears.
  - c. The albatross.



- d. The experiences of the mariners from the shooting of the albatross to the appearance of the spectre-ship.
  - e. The spectre-ship.
  - f. The mariner's experiences until he blesses the "creatures of the great calm."
  - g. The navigation of the ship by the dead men.
  - h. The Two Voices.
  - i. The awakening from the trance.
  - j. The arrival in the home harbor.
  - k. The rescue of the mariner by the hermit and the pilot.
  - l. The fate of the ship.
  - m. The mariner's after experiences.
3. Discuss the poet's method of telling the story.
  4. Restate briefly all the descriptions of landscape and country in the poem.
  5. Restate briefly all the descriptions of the sea.
  6. Describe in detail —
    - a. The Ancient Mariner.
    - b. The ship driven by the storm-blast.
    - c. The sea in the regions of the south pole.
    - d. The calm.
    - e. The spectre-ship and her crew.
    - f. The sea after the mariner alone survives.
    - g. The home harbor.
  7. Discuss the poet's method of description.
  8. What was the religion of the Ancient Mariner?
  9. What customs are referred or alluded to which no longer exist?
  10. What indications are there as to the geography and the period of the poem?
  11. Compare the gloss with the poem itself in substance.
  12. How far does the gloss contribute to the effect of *The Ancient Mariner* as a whole?
  13. Why is the motto from Burnet appropriate? Explain fully.
  14. What in the poem is strictly supernatural?
  15. Does it seem real to you? Why?
  16. Discuss the form of the poem.
  17. Discuss the metre.
  18. Compare *The Ancient Mariner* with an old ballad, for example, *Sir Patrick Spens*.
  19. Tell the story of the composition of the poem.

20. What do you conceive to have been Wordsworth's share, both in direct contribution and in influence on Coleridge?
21. What materials did the poet use in writing it?
22. Is there anything similar to *The Ancient Mariner* in literature, either in spirit or in form?
23. What is the relation of the poem to the other literature of the time?
24. What do you think was the poet's *purpose* in writing *The Ancient Mariner*?
25. What is the obvious *moral* of the poem?
26. Are the moral and the purpose here the same?
27. What does the poem mean to you?

## IX. CHRONOLOGICAL SURVEY

### I. LIFE<sup>1</sup>

1772. Samuel Taylor Coleridge, born in Ottery St. Mary, Devon, 21st October.
1781. Death of his father, 4th October.
1782. Entered at Christ's Hospital, 18th July.
1791. Discharged from Christ's Hospital, 7th September.  
Goes into residence at Jesus College, Cambridge, October.
1793. Enlisted in King's Regiment of Light Dragoons, December.
1794. Discharged from the army, April.  
Visit to Oxford and meeting with Southey, June.  
"Pantisocracy," Autumn.  
Leaves Cambridge finally, December.
1795. Settled at Bristol, lecturing and writing.  
Married to Sarah Fricker, 4th October.
1796. First edition of poems published, April.  
Issue of the Watchman, 1st March to 13th May.  
Birth of Hartley Coleridge, 19th September.  
Settled at Nether Stowey, December.
1797. Settlement of the Wordsworths at Alfoxden, July.  
The Ancient Mariner begun, 13th November.  
First part of Christabel begun.

<sup>1</sup> I have followed here substantially the Table in the *Letters* edited by E. H. Coleridge.

- 1798. Accepts annuity of one hundred and fifty pounds from Josiah and Thomas Wedgwood, January.  
Goes to Germany, September.
- 1799. Returns from Germany, July.  
Begins to write for Morning Post, December.
- 1800. Translation of Schiller's Wallenstein, Spring.  
Birth of Derwent Coleridge, 14th September.  
Second part of Christabel, Autumn.
- 1802. Birth of Sara Coleridge, 23d December.
- 1804. Journey to Malta.
- 1806. Residence in Rome, January to May.  
Returns to England, August.
- 1808. First lecture at Royal Institution, 12th January.
- 1809-10. The Friend.
- 1813. Production of Remorse at Drury Lane, 23d January.
- 1816. Settles with Mr. Gillman at Highgate, 16th April.
- 1834. Death, 25th July.

## II. WORKS <sup>1</sup>

- 1. Fall of Robespierre, 1794 (first act by Coleridge).
- 2. Moral and Political Lecture delivered at Bristol, 1795.
- 3. Conciones ad Populum, 1795.
- 4. The Plot discovered, in an address to the people against ministerial treason, 1795 (3 and 4 in Essays on His Own Times).
- 5. The Watchman. (Ten numbers, 1st March to 13th May, 1796.)
- 6. Poems on Various Subjects, 1796. (Three Sonnets by Charles Lamb.) Second edition in 1797, with poems by C. Lamb and C. Lloyd. Third edition in 1803, omitting Lloyd's and Lamb's poems.
- 7. Destiny of Nations. (Originally contributed to Southey's Joan of Arc; republished under this title, with alterations, in 1828 and 1834. Original form in Cottle's Early Recollections, Appendix.)
- 8. Ode to the Departing Year. (Cambridge Intelligencer, 31st December, 1796, and separately, 1796.)

<sup>1</sup> For this Table I am indebted in the main to the article on Coleridge by Leslie Stephen, in the *Dictionary of National Biography*.

9. *The Ancient Mariner*, in *Lyrical Ballads*, 1798.
10. *Fears in Solitude* (previously in *Morning Post*) ; France, an Ode (previously as *Recantation in Morning Post*) ; *Frost at Midnight* ; 1798.
11. *Poems in Annual Anthology* for 1800.
12. *Wallenstein*, 1800.
13. *The Friend*, a Literary, Moral, and Political Journal, excluding personal and party topics and the events of the day ; 27 parts, 1st June, 1809, to 15th March, 1810. Reissued 1812. New and greatly altered edition, 1818.
14. *Remorse*, a Tragedy, 1813 (three editions). *Osorio*, as written in 1797, was published in 1873.
15. *Essays on the Fine Arts in Felix Farley's Journal*, 1814.
16. *Christabel*, with *Kubla Khan* and *Pains of Sleep*, 1816.
17. *Sibylline Leaves* (chiefly republications), 1817.
18. *Zapolya*, a Christmas Tale, 1817.
19. *Biographia Literaria*, 1817. Second edition with notes by Henry Nelson and Sara Coleridge in 1847.
20. *Aids to Reflection in the Formation of a Manly Character*, etc., 1825.
21. *On the Constitution of Church and State*, 1830.

POSTHUMOUSLY PUBLISHED WERE :—

1. *Specimens of his Table Talk*. By Henry Nelson Coleridge, 1835. Later republished with *Omniana and Other Fragments*, by T. Ashe, in 1884.
2. *Confessions of an Inquiring Spirit*. Edited by Henry Nelson Coleridge, 1840 ; with notes by Sara Coleridge, 1849.
3. *Literary Remains*. Edited by H. N. Coleridge ; Vols. I. and II., 1836 ; Vols. III. and IV., 1838.
4. *Essay on Method* (from *Encyclopædia Metropolitana*, dated January, 1818), 1845.
5. *Notes and Lectures upon Shakespeare and some of the Old Dramatists*. Edited by Sara Coleridge. 2 vols. 1849.
6. *Notes upon English Divines*. Edited by Derwent Coleridge. 2 vols. 1853.
7. *Essays on His Own Times*. Edited by Sara Coleridge. 3 vols. 1850. (Early pamphlets and contributions to the *Morning Post* and *Courier* in prose and verse.)

8. Lectures on Shakespeare, from notes by J. P. Collier, 1875.
9. Lectures and Notes on Shakespeare and other English Poets.  
Brought together by T. Ashe, 1885.
10. *Anima Poetæ*, from the Unpublished Note-books of S. T. C.  
Edited by E. H. Coleridge, 1895.
11. Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge. Edited by E. H. Coleridge. 2 vols. 1895.

## COLLECTED EDITIONS

First collected edition of Poetical and Dramatic Works, published by Coleridge himself, 1828.

Revised issue, 1829.

Second edition, by H. N. Coleridge, 1834.

The Poetical and Dramatic Works of S. T. C., with a life of the author. London, 1836. 12mo.

Another edition, with a Memoir. Edited by Sara and D. Coleridge. 3 vols. Boston, 1854.

Another edition, founded on the author's latest edition of 1834, with many additional pieces now first included, and with a collection of various readings. Edited by R. H. Shepherd. 4 vols. London, 1877.

Another edition, Poetical and Dramatic Works. 4 vols. London, 1880. A reissue of the preceding, published by Macmillan, with a supplement to Vol. II.

The Poetical Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge. Edited with a Biographical Introduction by James Dykes Campbell. London and New York: Macmillan and Co., 1893. Founded on the edition of 1829 as the last upon which Coleridge "was able to bestow personal care and attention."

The Complete Works of S. T. Coleridge, with an introductory essay upon his philosophical and theological opinions. Edited by Professor Shedd. 7 vols. New York, 1853.

## X. BIBLIOGRAPHY

For a thorough study of Coleridge the biography by J. Dykes Campbell is indispensable: published as a Memoir introductory to the Poetical Works of Coleridge, Macmillan, 1893; reissued as

Samuel Taylor Coleridge, a Narrative of the Events of His Life, 1894. Comprehensive biographies are those by H. D. Traill (English Men of Letters Series) and Hall Caine (Great Writers Series). The latter contains a full bibliography (up to 1887) compiled by J. P. Anderson of the British Museum. Briefer accounts are those by Leslie Stephen in the Dictionary of National Biography — also with bibliography — and by Rossetti in Lives of the Famous Poets. A scholarly and stimulating study of Coleridge as a poet is the Life by Professor A. Brandl, translated by Lady Eastlake. For original material one should turn to the Biographia Literaria, and to the Letters of Coleridge (2 vols., 1895), selected especially to illustrate the story of the writer's life.

Contemporaries who have left records, portraits, sketches, reminiscences of Coleridge are Wordsworth, Southey, Lamb, Cottle, Hazlitt, Leigh Hunt, Gillman, Carlyon, Carlyle.

Recent essays which the student will find significant are those by Stopford Brooke, Golden Book of Coleridge, Theology in the English Poets; Dowden, New Studies in Literature; Swinburne, Essays and Studies; William Watson, Excursions in Criticism; J. C. Shairp, Studies in Poetry; Pater, Appreciations; Lowell, Democracy and Other Addresses; Richard Garnett, Poetry of Coleridge; Mrs. Oliphant, Literary History of England, Vol. I.; Leslie Stephen, Hours in a Library, Vol. III.; J. M. Robertson, New Essays towards a Critical Method. Poole's Index may be consulted for magazine articles.





“By thy long grey beard and glittering eye,  
Now wherefore stopp’st thou me?”



My memory first?

Kinds of Crime - continuing  
human Crime defined by power

# THE RIME OF THE ANCIENT MARINER

## IN SEVEN PARTS

Facile credo, plures esse Naturas invisibiles quam visibiles in rerum universitate. Sed horum omnium familiam quis nobis enarrabit? et gradus et cognationes et discrimina et singulorum munera? Quid agunt? quæ loca habitant? Harum rerum notitiam semper ambivit ingenium humanum, nunquam attigit. Juvat, interea, non diffiteor, quandoque in animo, tanquam in Tabulâ, majoris et melioris mundi imaginem contemplari: ne mens assuefacta hodiernæ vitæ minutiis se contrahat nimis, et tota subsidat in pusillas cogitationes. Sed veritati interea invigilandum est, modusque servandus, ut certa ab incertis, diem a nocte, distinguamus.

—T. BURNET: ARCHÆOL. PHIL., p. 68.

### ARGUMENT

How a Ship having passed the Line was driven by Storms to the cold Country towards the South Pole; and how from thence she made her course to the tropical Latitude of the Great Pacific Ocean; and of the strange things that befell; and in what manner the Ancyent Marinere came back to his own Country. [1798.]

### PART THE FIRST

It is an ancient Mariner,

And he stoppeth one of three.

"By thy long grey beard and glittering eye,

"Now wherefore stopp'st thou me?"

5 "The Bridegroom's doors are opened wide,

"And I am next of kin;

"The guests are met, the feast is set:

"May'st hear the merry din."

An ancient  
Mariner meet-  
eth three Gal-  
lants bidden  
to a wedding-  
feast, and de-  
taineth one.

He holds him with his skinny hand,

10 "There was a ship," quoth he.

"Hold off! unhand me, grey-beard loon!"

Eftsoons his hand dropt he.

The wedding-guest is spell-bound by the eye of the old sea-faring man, and constrained to hear his tale.

He holds him with his glittering eye —

The wedding-guest stood still,

15 And listens like a three-years child:

The Mariner hath his will.

The wedding-guest sat on a stone:

He cannot chuse but hear;

And thus spake on that ancient man,

20 The bright-eyed mariner.

The ship was cheered, the harbour cleared,

Merrily did we drop

Below the kirk, below the hill,

Below the lighthouse top.

The Mariner tells how the ship sailed southward with a good wind and fair weather, till it reached the line.

25 The Sun came up upon the left,

Out of the sea came he!

And he shone bright, and on the right

Went down into the sea.

Higher and higher every day,

30 Till over the mast at noon —

The Wedding-Guest here beat his breast,

For he heard the loud bassoon.

The wedding-guest heareth the bridal music; but the mariner continueth his tale.

The bride hath paced into the hall,

Red as a rose is she;

35 Nodding their heads before her goes

The merry minstrelsy.



The bride hath paced into the hall ;  
Red as a rose is she.

Loneliness - see later

out of the loneliness of history  
comes the first response  
— is the "natural" response  
of the response — is the  
loneliness (nature as nature)  
contrasted with later

The Wedding-Guest he beat his breast,  
 Yet he cannot chuse but hear;  
 And thus spake on that ancient man,  
 40 The bright-eyed Mariner.

And now the STORM-BLAST came, and he  
 Was tyrannous and strong:  
 He struck with his o'ertaking wings,  
 And chased us south along.

The ship  
 drawn by a  
 storm toward  
 the south pole.

45 With sloping masts and dipping prow,  
 As who pursued with yell and blow  
 Still treads the shadow of his foe  
 And forward bends his head,  
 The ship drove fast, loud roared the blast,  
 50 And southward aye we fled.

And now there came both mist and snow  
 And it grew wondrous cold:  
 And ice, mast-high, came floating by,  
 As green as emerald.

55 And through the drifts the snowy clifts  
 Did send a dismal sheen:  
 Nor shapes of men nor beasts we ken —  
 The ice was all between.

The land of  
 ice, and of  
 fearful  
 sounds, where  
 no living  
 thing was to  
 be seen.

The ice was here, the ice was there,  
 60 The ice was all around:  
 It cracked and growled, and roared and  
 howled,  
 Like noises in a swound!

At length did cross an Albatross:  
 Thorough the fog it came;  
 65 As if it had been a Christian soul,  
 We hailed it in God's name,

Till a great  
 sea-bird,  
 called the  
 Albatross,  
 came through  
 the snow-fog,  
 and was re-  
 ceived with  
 great joy and  
 hospitality.

It ate the food it ne'er had eat,  
And round and round it flew.

The ice did split with a thunder-fit;

70 The helmsman steered us through!

And a good south wind sprung up behind;

The Albatross did follow;

And every day, for food or play

Came to the mariner's hollo!

75 In mist or cloud, on mast or shroud,

It perched for vespers nine;

Whiles all the night, through fog-smoke white,

Glimmered the white Moon-shine.

"God save thee, ancient Mariner!

80 From the fiends, that plague thee thus! —

Why look'st thou so?" — With my cross-bow

I shot the ALBATROSS.

And lo! the  
Albatross  
proveth a bird  
of good omen,  
and followeth  
the ship as it  
returned  
northward,  
through fog  
and floating  
ice.

The ancient  
Mariner in-  
hospitably  
killeth the  
pious bird of  
good omen.

#### PART THE SECOND.

THE Sun now rose upon the right:

Out of the sea came he,

85 Still hid in mist, and on the left

Went down into the sea.

And the good south wind still blew behind,

But no sweet bird did follow,

Nor any day for food or play

90 Came to the mariners' hollo!



And a good south wind sprung up behind;  
The Albatross did follow,

And every day, for food or play,  
Came to the mariners' hollo!



Then all averr'd, I had kill'd the bird  
That brought the fog and mist.

"'T was right," said they, "such birds to slay,  
That bring the fog and mist."



And I had done an hellish thing,

And it would work 'em woe :

For all averred, I had killed the bird

That made the breeze to blow.

95 Ah wretch ! said they, the bird to slay,

That made the breeze to blow !

Nor dim nor red, like God's own head,

The glorious Sun uprist :

Then all averred, I had killed the bird

100 That brought the fog and mist.

'Twas right, said they, such birds to slay,

That bring the fog and mist.

The fair breeze blew, the white foam flew,

The furrow followed free ;

105 We were the first that ever burst

Into that silent sea.

Down dropt the breeze, the sails dropt down,

'Twas sad as sad could be ;

And we did speak only to break

110 The silence of the sea !

All in a hot and copper sky,

The bloody Sun, at noon,

Right up above the mast did stand,

No bigger than the Moon.

His ship-  
mates cry out  
against the  
ancient Mari-  
ner, for kill-  
ing the bird of  
good luck.

But when the  
fog cleared  
off, they  
justify the  
same, and  
thus make  
themselves  
accomplices  
in the crime.

The fair  
breeze con-  
tinues ; the  
ship enters  
the Pacific  
Ocean and  
sails north-  
ward, even  
till it reaches  
the Line.  
The ship hath  
suddenly been  
becalmed.

115 Day after day, day after day,

We stuck, nor breath nor motion ;

As idle as a painted ship

Upon a painted ocean.

And the Albatross begins to be avenged.

Water, water, every where,  
120 And all the boards did shrink;  
Water, water, every where,  
Nor any drop to drink.

A spirit had followed them; one of the invisible inhabitants of this planet, neither departed souls

The very deep did rot: O Christ!  
That ever this should be!  
125 Yea, slimy things did crawl with legs  
Upon the slimy sea.

nor angels; concerning whom the learned Jew, Josephus, and the Platonian Constantinopolitan, Michael Psellus, may be consulted.

About, about, in reel and rout  
The death-fires danced at night;  
The water, like a witch's oils,  
130 Burnt green, and blue and white.

They are very numerous, and there is no climate or element without one or more.

And some in dreams assured were  
Of the spirit that plagued us so;  
Nine fathom deep he had followed us  
From the land of mist and snow.

The shipmates, in their sore distress, would fain throw the whole guilt on the ancient Mariner: in sign whereof they hang the dead sea-bird round his neck.

135 And every tongue, through utter drought,  
Was withered at the root;  
We could not speak, no more than if  
We had been choked with soot.

Ah! well a-day! what evil looks  
140 Had I from old and young!  
Instead of the cross, the Albatross  
About my neck was hung.

## PART THE THIRD.

THERE passed a weary time. Each throat  
Was parched, and glazed each eye.

145 A weary time! a weary time!  
How glazed each weary eye,  
When looking westward, I beheld  
A something in the sky.

At first it seemed a little speck,  
150 And then it seemed a mist;  
It moved and moved, and took at last  
A certain shape, I wist.

A speck, a mist, a shape, I wist!  
And still it neared and neared:  
155 As if it dodged a water-sprite,  
It plunged and tacked and veered.

With throats unslaked, with black lips baked,  
We could nor laugh nor wail;  
Through utter drought all dumb we stood!  
160 I bit my arm, I sucked the blood,  
And cried, A sail! a sail!

With throats unslaked, with black lips baked  
Agape they heard me call:  
Gramercy! they for joy did grin,  
165 And all at once their breath drew in,  
As they were drinking all.

See! See! (I cried) she tacks no more!  
Hither to work us weal;  
Without a breeze, without a tide,  
170 She steadies with upright keel!

The ancient  
Mariner be-  
holdeth a sign  
in the element  
afar off.

At its nearer  
approach, it  
seemeth him  
to be a ship;  
and at a dear  
ransom he  
freeth his  
speech from  
the bonds of  
thirst.

A flash of joy.

And horror  
follows. For  
can it be a  
ship that  
comes onward  
without wind  
or tide?

The western wave was all a-flame.

The day was well-nigh done!

Almost upon the western wave

Rested the broad bright Sun;

175 When that strange shape drove suddenly  
Betwixt us and the Sun.

It seemeth  
him but the  
skeleton of a  
ship.

And straight the Sun was flecked with bars,  
(Heaven's Mother send us grace !)

As if through a dungeon-grate he peered

180 With broad and burning face.

Alas! (thought I, and my heart beat loud)

How fast she nears and nears!

Are those *her* sails that glance in the Sun,  
Like restless gossameres!

And its ribs  
are seen as  
bars on the  
face of the set-  
ting Sun.  
The spectre-  
woman and  
her death-  
mate, and no  
other on  
board the  
skeleton ship.  
Like vessel,  
like crew!

185 Are those *her* ribs through which the Sun  
Did peer, as through a grate?

And is that Woman all her crew?

Is that a DEATH? and are there two?

Is DEATH that woman's mate?

190 *Her* lips were red, *her* looks were free,

Her locks were yellow as gold:

Her skin was as white as leprosy,

The Night-Mare LIFE-IN-DEATH was she,

Who thicks man's blood with cold.

DEATH and  
LIFE-IN-  
DEATH have  
diced for the  
ship's crew,  
and she (the  
latter) win-  
neth the an-  
cient Mariner.

195 The naked hulk alongside came,

And the twain were casting dice;

"The game is done! I've won! I've won!"

Quoth she, and whistles thrice.

The Sun's rim dips; the stars rush out :  
 200 At one stride comes the Dark ;  
 With far-heard whisper, o'er the sea,  
 Off shot the spectre-bark.

No twilight  
 within the  
 courts of the  
 sun.

We listened and looked sideways up !  
 Fear at my heart, as at a cup,  
 205 My life-blood seemed to sip !  
 The stars were dim, and thick the night,  
 The steersman's face by his lamp gleamed  
 white ;  
 From the sails the dew did drip —  
 Till clomb above the eastern bar  
 210 The horned Moon, with one bright star  
 Within the nether tip.

At the rising  
 of the Moon,

One after one, by the star-dogged Moon,  
 Too quick for groan or sigh  
 Each turned his face with a ghastly pang,  
 215 And cursed me with his eye.

One after  
 another,

Four times fifty living men,  
 (And I heard nor sigh nor groan)  
 With heavy thump, a lifeless lump,  
 They dropped down one by one.

His shipmates  
 drop down  
 dead ;

220 The souls did from their bodies fly, —  
 They fled to bliss or woe !  
 And every soul, it passed me by,  
 Like the whizz of my cross-bow !

But LIFE-IN-  
 DEATH begins  
 her work on  
 the ancient  
 Mariner.

## PART THE FOURTH

The wedding-  
guest feareth  
that a Spirit  
is talking to  
him;

"I FEAR thee, ancient Mariner!  
225 I fear thy skinny hand!  
And thou art long, and lank, and brown,  
As is the ribbed sea-sand.

But the an-  
cient Mariner  
assureth him  
of his bodily  
life, and pro-  
ceedeth to  
relate his hor-  
rible penance,

I fear thee and thy glittering eye,  
And thy skinny hand, so brown." —  
230 Fear not, fear not, thou Wedding-Guest!  
This body dropt not down.

Alone, alone, all, all alone,  
Alone on a wide wide sea!  
And never a saint took pity on  
235 My soul in agony.

He despiseth  
the creatures  
of the calm.

The many men, so beautiful!  
And they all dead did lie:  
And a thousand thousand slimy things  
Lived on; and so did I.

And envieth  
that they  
should live,  
and so many  
lie dead.

240 I looked upon the rotting sea,  
And drew my eyes away;  
I looked upon the rotting deck,  
And there the dead men lay.

I looked to Heaven, and tried to pray;  
245 But or ever a prayer had gusht,  
A wicked whisper came, and made  
My heart as dry as dust.





Ah ! well-a-day ! what evil looks  
Had I from old and young !

Instead of the cross, the Albatross  
About my neck was hung.



The spirit who hideth by himself  
In the land of Mist and Snow,

He loved the bird that loved the man  
Who shot him with his bow.



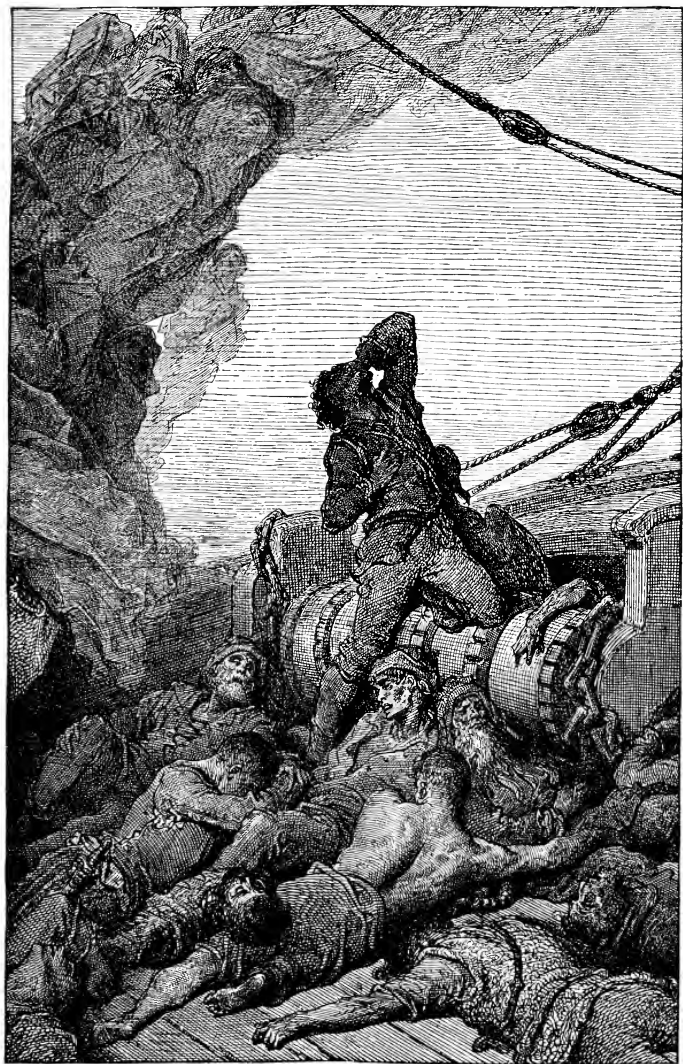




The naked hulk alongside came,  
And the twain were casting dice;

"The game is done! I've won, I've won!"  
Quoth she, and whistles thrice.





And never a saint took pity on  
My soul in agony.



I closed my lids, and kept them close,  
 And the balls like pulses beat;  
 250 For the sky and the sea, and the sea and the  
       sky  
 Lay like a load on my weary eye, *that does not see*  
 And the dead were at my feet.

The cold sweat melted from their limbs,  
 Nor rot nor reek did they:  
 255 The look with which they looked on me  
 Had never passed away.

An orphan's curse would drag to Hell  
 A spirit from on high;  
 But oh! more horrible than that  
 260 Is a curse in a dead man's eye!  
 Seven days, seven nights, I saw that curse,  
 And yet I could not die.

The moving Moon went up the sky,  
 And no where did abide:  
 265 Softly she was going up,  
 And a star or two beside —

Her beams bemoaned the sultry main,  
 Like April hoar-frost spread;  
 But where the ship's huge shadow lay,  
 270 The charmed water burnt away  
 A still and awful red.

Beyond the shadow of the ship,  
 I watched the water-snakes:  
 They moved in tracks of shining white,  
 275 And when they reared, the elfish light  
 Fell off in hoary flakes.

But the curse  
 liveth for him  
 in the eye of  
 the dead men.

*April, July*  
 In his loneli-  
 ness and fixed-  
 ness he yearn-  
 eth towards  
 the journeying  
Moon, and the  
 stars that still  
 sojourn, yet  
 still move on-  
 ward; and  
 everywhere  
 the blue sky  
 belongs to  
 them, and is  
 their ap-  
 pointed rest,  
 and their na-  
tive country  
 and their own  
 natural  
 homes, which  
 they enter  
 unannounced,  
 as lords that  
 are certainly  
 expected and  
 yet there is a  
 silent joy at  
 their arrival.  
 By the light of  
 the Moon he  
 beholdeth  
 God's crea-  
 tures of the  
 great calm

Within the shadow of the ship  
 I watched their rich attire :  
 Blue, glossy green, and velvet black,  
 280 They coiled and swam ; and every track  
 Was a flash of golden fire.

Their beauty  
 and their  
 happiness.

① O happy living things ! no tongue  
 Their beauty might declare :  
 ② A spring of love gushed from my heart,  
 285 And I blessed them unaware :  
 Sure my kind saint took pity on me,  
 And I blessed them unaware.

He blesseth  
 them in his  
 heart.

The spell  
 begins to  
 break.

The selfsame moment I could pray ;  
 And from my neck so free  
 290 The Albatross fell off, and sank  
 Like lead into the sea.

---

PART THE FIFTH

OH SLEEP ! it is a gentle thing,  
 Beloved from pole to pole !  
 To Mary Queen the praise be given !  
 295 She sent the gentle sleep from Heaven,  
 That slid into my soul.

By grace of  
 the holy  
 Mother, the  
 ancient Mari-  
 ner is re-  
 freshed with  
 rain.

The silly buckets on the deck,  
 That had so long remained,  
 I dreamt that they were filled with dew ;  
 300 And when I awoke, it rained.

My lips were wet, my throat was cold,  
 My garments all were dank ;  
 Sure I had drunken in my dreams,  
 And still my body drank.





She sent the gentle sleep from Heaven,  
That slid into my soul.



305 I moved, and could not feel my limbs :  
 I was so light — almost  
 I thought that I had died in sleep,  
 And was a blessed ghost.

And soon I heard a roaring wind :  
 310 It did not come anear ;  
 But with its sound it shook the sails,  
 That were so thin and sere.

He heareth  
 sounds and  
 seeth strange  
 sights and  
 commotions  
 in the sky and  
 the element.

The upper air burst into life !  
 And a hundred fire-flags sheen,  
 315 To and fro they were hurried about !  
 And to and fro, and in and out,  
 The wan stars danced between.

And the coming wind did roar more loud,  
 And the sails did sigh like sedge ;  
 320 And the rain poured down from one black  
 cloud ;  
 The Moon was at its edge.

The thick black cloud was cleft, and still  
 The Moon was at its side :  
 Like waters shot from some high crag,  
 325 The lightning fell with never a jag,  
 A river steep and wide.

The loud wind never reached the ship,  
 Yet now the ship moved on !  
 Beneath the lightning and the moon  
 330 The dead men gave a groan.

The bodies of  
 the ship's  
 crew are in-  
 spired, and  
 the ship  
 moves on ;

They groaned, they stirred, they all uprose,  
 Nor spake, nor moved their eyes ;  
 It had been strange, even in a dream,  
 To have seen those dead men rise.

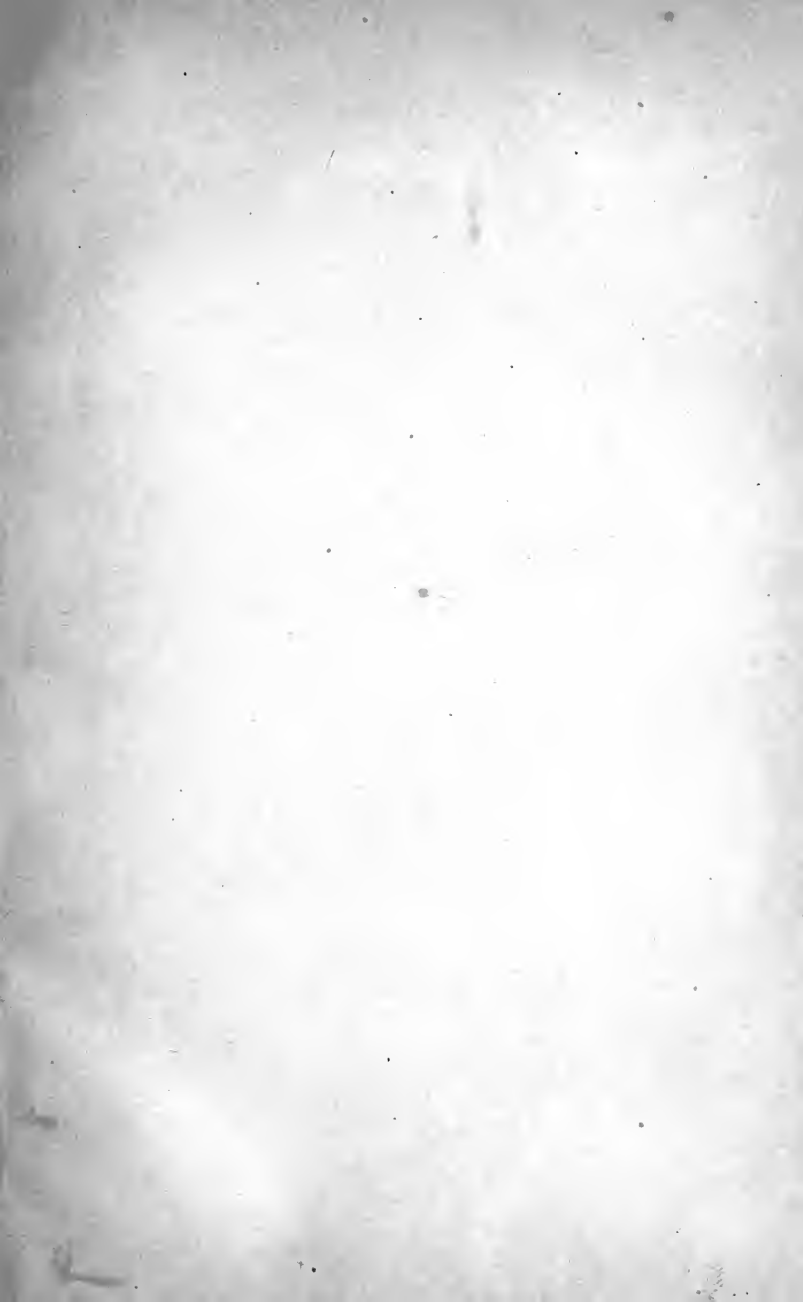
335 The helmsman steered, the ship moved on ;  
 Yet never a breeze upblew ;  
 The mariners all 'gan work the ropes,  
 Where they were wont to do ;  
 They raised their limbs like lifeless tools —  
 340 We were a ghastly crew.

The body of my brother's son  
 Stood by me, knee to knee :  
 The body and I pulled at one rope,  
 But he said nought to me.

But not by  
 the souls of  
 the men, nor  
 by dæmons  
 of earth or  
 middle air,  
 but by a  
 blessed troop  
 of angelic  
 spirits, sent  
 down by the  
 invocation of  
 the guardian  
 saint.

345 "I fear thee, ancient Mariner!"  
 Be calm, thou Wedding-Guest!  
 'Twas not those souls that fled in pain,  
 Which to their corpses came again,  
 But a troop of spirits blest:  
 350 For when it dawned — they dropped their  
 arms,  
 And clustered round the mast;  
 Sweet sounds rose slowly through their mouths.  
 And from their bodies passed.

Around, around, flew each sweet sound,  
 355 Then darted to the Sun; *now redeemed*  
 Slowly the sounds came back again,  
 Now mixed, now one by one.





But why drives on that ship so fast,  
Without or wave or wind ?

Sometimes a-dropping from the sky

I heard the sky-lark sing ;

360 Sometimes all little birds that are,  
How they seemed to fill the sea and air  
With their sweet jargoning !

And now 'twas like all instruments,

Now like a lonely flute ;

365 And now it is an angel's song,  
That makes the Heavens be mute.

It ceased ; yet still the sails made on

A pleasant noise till noon,

A noise like of a hidden brook

370 In the leafy month of June,  
That to the sleeping woods all night  
Singeth a quiet tune.

Till noon we quietly sailed on,

Yet never a breeze did breathe :

375 Slowly and smoothly went the ship,  
Moved onward from beneath.

Under the keel nine fathom deep,

From the land of mist and snow,

The spirit slid : and it was he

380 That made the ship to go.

The sails at noon left off their tune,

And the ship stood still also.

The Sun, right up above the mast,

Had fixed her to the ocean :

385 But in a minute she 'gan stir,

With a short uneasy motion —

Backwards and forwards half her length,

With a short uneasy motion.

The lonesome  
spirit from  
the south-pole  
carries on the  
ship as far as  
the line, in  
obedience to  
the angelic  
troop, but still  
requireth  
vengeance.

Then like a pawing horse let go,  
 390 She made a sudden bound :  
 It flung the blood into my head,  
 And I fell down in a swoond.

The Polar  
 Spirit's  
 fellow  
 dæmons, the  
 invisible in-  
 habitants of  
 the element,  
 take part in  
 his wrong ;  
 and two of  
 them relate,  
 one to the  
 other, that  
 penance long  
 and heavy for  
 the ancient  
 Mariner hath  
 been accorded  
 to the Polar  
 Spirit, who  
 returneth  
 southward.

How long in that same fit I lay,  
 I have not to declare ;  
 395 But ere my living life returned,  
 I heard and in my soul discerned  
 Two VOICES in the air.

" Is it he ? " quoth one, " Is this the man ?  
 By him who died on cross, *cross again*  
 400 With his cruel bow he laid full low  
 The harmless Albatross.

The spirit who bideth by himself  
 In the land of mist and snow,  
 He loved the bird that loved the man  
 405 Who shot him with his bow."

The other was a softer voice,  
 As soft as honey-dew :  
 Quoth he, " The man hath penance done,  
 And penance more will do."

## PART THE SIXTH

## FIRST VOICE

410 BUT tell me, tell me ! speak again,  
 Thy soft response renewing —  
 What makes the ship drive on so fast ?  
 What is the OCEAN doing ?



## SECOND VOICE

Still as a slave before his lord,  
 415 The OCEAN hath no blast;  
 His great bright eye most silently  
 Up to the Moon is cast —

If he may know which way to go;  
 For she guides him smooth or grim.  
 420 See, brother, see! how graciously  
 She looketh down on him.

## FIRST VOICE

But why drives on that ship so fast,  
 Without or wave or wind?

## SECOND VOICE

The air is cut away before,  
 425 And closes from behind.

Fly, brother, fly! more high, more high!  
 Or we shall be belated:  
 For slow and slow that ship will go,  
 When the Mariner's trance is abated.

430 I woke, and we were sailing on  
 As in a gentle weather:  
 'Twas night, calm night, the Moon was high;  
 The dead men stood together.

All stood together on the deck,  
 435 For a charnel-dungeon fitter:  
 All fixed on me their stony eyes,  
 That in the Moon did glitter.

The Mariner  
 hath been cast  
 into a trance;  
 for the angelic  
 power causeth  
 the vessel to  
 drive north-  
 ward faster  
 than human  
 life could en-  
 dure.

The super-  
 natural  
 motion is re-  
 tardated; the  
 Mariner  
 awakes, and  
 his penance  
 begins anew.

*imagined the crew  
 sailed the ship before*

The pang, the curse, with which they died,  
Had never passed away :

440 I could not draw my eyes from theirs,  
Nor turn them up to pray.

The curse is  
finally ex-  
piated.

And now this spell was snapt: once more  
I viewed the ocean green,

And looked far forth, yet little saw  
445 Of what had else been seen —

Like one, that on a lonesome road  
Doth walk in fear and dread,  
And having once turned round walks on,  
And turns no more his head ;

450 Because he knows, a frightful fiend  
Doth close behind him tread.

But soon there breathed a wind on me,  
Nor sound nor motion made :

Its path was not upon the sea,  
455 In ripple or in shade.

It raised my hair, it fanned my cheek  
Like a meadow-gale of spring —  
It mingled strangely with my fears,  
Yet it felt like a welcoming.

460 Swiftly, swiftly flew the ship,  
Yet she sailed softly too :  
Sweetly, sweetly blew the breeze —  
On me alone it blew.

And the an-  
cient Mariner  
beholdeth his  
native  
country.

Oh ! dream of joy ! is this indeed

465 The light-house top I see ?  
Is this the hill ? is this the kirk ?  
Is this mine own countree ?

is mounted

oplain

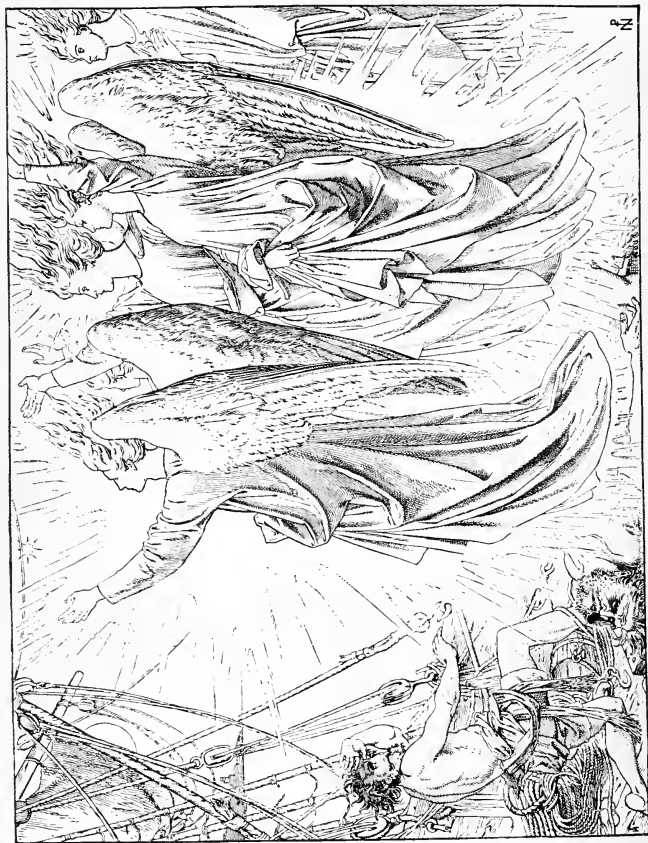
the same - recapitulation  
of the first redemption  
again - none again

word again of second redemption

open, certainly

part + certainly, - "short"

part must



They stood as signals to the land,  
Each one a lovely light.

This seraph-band, each waved his hand :  
It was a heavenly sight !

We drifted o'er the harbour-bar,  
 And I with sobs did pray —  
 470 O let me be awake, my God!  
 Or let me sleep away.

The harbour-bay was clear as glass,  
 So smoothly it was strewn!  
 And on the bay the moonlight lay,  
 475 And the shadow of the moon.

The rock shone bright, the kirk no less,  
 That stands above the rock:  
 The moonlight steeped in silentness  
 The steady weathercock.

480 And the bay was white with silent light,  
 Till rising from the same,  
 Full many shapes, that shadows were,  
 In crimson colours came.

The angelic  
 spirits leave  
 the dead  
 bodies,

A little distance from the prow  
 485 Those crimson shadows were:  
 I turned my eyes upon the deck —  
 Oh, Christ! what saw I there!

And appear in  
 their own  
 forms of light.

Each corse lay flat, lifeless and flat,  
 And, by the holy rood!  
 490 A man all light, a seraph-man,  
 On every corse there stood.

kirk & light  
 sun, moon,  
 & spirit.

This seraph-band, each waved his hand:  
 It was a heavenly sight!  
 They stood as signals to the land,  
 495 Each one a lovely light;

This seraph-band, each waved his hand,  
 No voice did they impart—  
 No voice; but oh! the silence sank  
 Like music on my heart.

500 But soon I heard the dash of oars,  
 I heard the Pilot's cheer;  
 My head was turned perforce away,  
 And I saw a boat appear.

The Pilot and the Pilot's boy,  
 505 I heard them coming fast:  
 Dear Lord in Heaven! it was a joy  
 The dead men could not blast.

I saw a third — I heard his voice:  
 It is the Hermit good!  
 510 He singeth loud his godly hymns  
 That he makes in the wood.  
 He'll shrieve my soul, he'll wash away  
 The Albatross's blood.

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PART THE SEVENTH

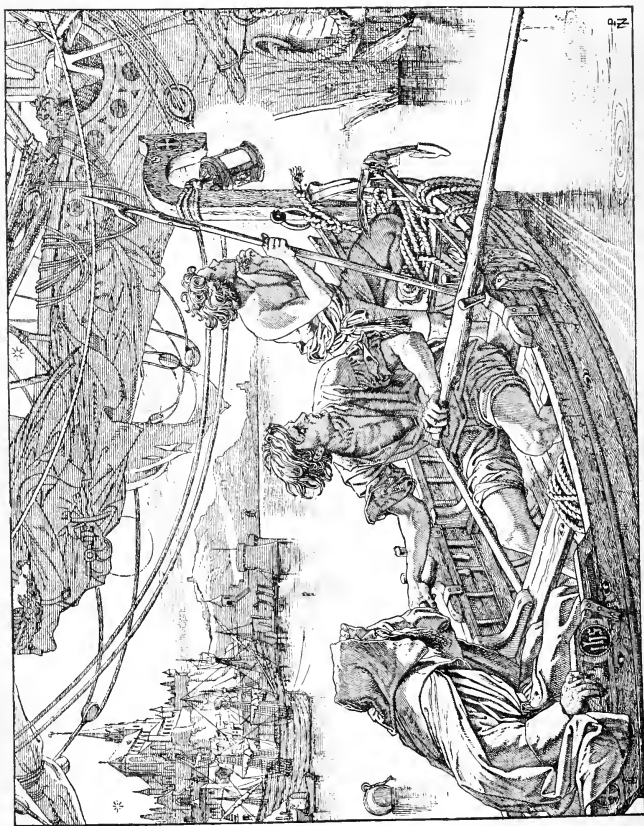
The Hermit of  
 the Wood,

THIS Hermit good lives in that wood  
 515 Which slopes down to the sea.  
 How loudly his sweet voice he rears!  
 He loves to talk with marineres  
 That come from a far countree.

He kneels at morn, and noon and eve—  
 520 He hath a cushion plump:  
 It is the moss that wholly hides  
 The rotted old oak-stump.

*Handwritten notes:*  
 The Hermit of the Wood  
 is a very old man  
 who has been in the wood  
 for many years





“Dear Lord! It hath a fiendish look —”  
(The pilot made reply)

“I am afeard” — “Push on, push on,”  
Said the Hermit cheerily.



The skiff-boat neared : I heard them talk,

“Why this is strange, I trow !

25 Where are those lights so many and fair,

That signal made but now ? ”

“Strange, by my faith ! ” the Hermit said —

“And they answered not our cheer !

The planks looked warped ! and see those  
sails,

30 How thin they are and sere !

I never saw aught like to them,

Unless perchance it were

Approacheth  
the ship with  
wonder.

Brown skeletons of leaves that lag

My forest-brook along ;

35 When the ivy-tod is heavy with snow,

And the owlet whoops to the wolf below,

That eats the she-wolf's young.”

“Dear Lord ! it hath a fiendish look —

(The Pilot made reply)

40 I am a-feared.” — “Push on, push on ! ”

Said the Hermit cheerily.

The boat came closer to the ship,

But I nor spake nor stirred ;

The boat came close beneath the ship,

45 And straight a sound was heard.

Under the water it rumbled on,

Still louder and more dread :

It reached the ship, it split the bay ;

The ship went down like lead.

The ship sud-  
denly sinketh.

The ancient  
Mariner is  
saved in the  
Pilot's boat.

550 Stunned by that loud and dreadful sound,  
Which sky and ocean smote,  
Like one that hath been seven days drowned  
My body lay afloat;  
But swift as dreams, myself I found  
555 Within the Pilot's boat.

Upon the whirl, where sank the ship,  
The boat spun round and round;  
And all was still, save that the hill  
Was telling of the sound.

560 I moved my lips — the Pilot shrieked  
And fell down in a fit;  
The holy Hermit raised his eyes,  
And prayed where he did sit.

I took the oars: the Pilot's boy,  
565 Who now doth crazy go,  
Laughed loud and long, and all the while  
His eyes went to and fro.  
"Ha, ha!" quoth he, "full plain I see,  
The Devil knows how to row."

570 And now, all in my own countree,  
I stood on the firm land!  
The Hermit stepped forth from the boat,  
And scarcely he could stand.

The ancient  
Mariner ear-  
nestly en-  
treateth the  
Hermit to  
shrieve him;  
and the pen-  
ance of life  
falls on him.

"O shrieve me, shrieve me, holy man!"  
575 The Hermit crossed his brow.  
"Say quick," quoth he, "I bid thee say —  
What manner of man art thou?"



Upon the whirl, where sank the ship,  
The boat spun round and round:

And all was still, save that the hill  
Was telling of the sound.







"O, shrieve me, shrieve me, holy man!"  
The Hermit crossed his brow.

"Say quick," quoth he, "I bid thee say—  
What manner of man art thou?"

out is *colours*  
 Forthwith this frame of mine was wrenched  
 With a woeful agony,  
 580 Which forced me to begin my tale;  
 And then it left me free.

Since then, at an uncertain hour,  
 That agony returns:

And till my ghastly tale is told,

585 This heart within me burns. *more etc*

And ever and anon through-  
 out his future  
 life an agony  
 constraineth  
 him to travel  
 from land to  
 land,

I pass, like night, from land to land;

I have strange power of speech;

That moment that his face I see,

I know the man that must hear me:

590 To him my tale I teach. *past as seen*

① What loud uproar bursts from that door!

The wedding-guests are there:

② But in the garden-bower the bride

And bride-maids singing are:

595 And hark the little vesper bell,

③ Which biddeth me to prayer!

O Wedding-Guest! this soul hath been

Alone on a wide wide sea:

So lonely 'twas, that God himself

600 Scarce seemed there to be.

O sweeter than the marriage-feast, —

'Tis sweeter far to me,

To walk together to the kirk

With a goodly company! —

*absolute monition?  
 or does the under  
 include 1 absolute  
 the "love" of  
 heart?  
 of Bunk*

605 To walk together to the kirk,  
 And all together pray,  
 While each to his great Father bends,  
 Old men, and babes, and loving friends,  
 And youths and maidens gay!

And to teach,  
 by his own ex-  
 ample, love  
 and reverence  
 to all things  
 that God made  
 and loveth.

610 Farewell, farewell! but this I tell  
 To thee, thou Wedding-Guest!  
 He prayeth well, who loveth well  
 Both man and bird and beast.

He prayeth best, who loveth best  
 615 All things both great and small;  
 For the dear God who loveth us,  
 He made and loveth all.

The Mariner, whose eye is bright,  
 Whose beard with age is hoar,  
 620 Is gone: and now the Wedding-Guest  
 Turned from the bridegroom's door.

He went like one that hath been stunned,  
 And is of sense forlorn:  
 A sadder and a wiser man,  
 625 He rose the morrow morn.



## NOTES

### THE TEXT

BEGUN in 1797, *The Ancient Mariner* was finished in March, 1798, if the following note in Dorothy Wordsworth's Journal refers, as is probable, to this poem. "March 23, 1798 — Coleridge dined with us. He brought his ballad finished."

*The Ancient Mariner* was first printed anonymously as the opening poem in the first edition of *Lyrical Ballads* in 1798 with the title, *The Rime of the Ancyent Marinere, in Seven Parts*. It was introduced by the Advertisement which Wordsworth later expanded into his famous prefaces, and by the Argument. In the second edition of *Lyrical Ballads*, 1800, the title was changed to *The Ancient Mariner; A Poet's Reverie*.<sup>1</sup> The Argument was differently phrased, and the text was much altered. Extreme archaisms of spelling and phrase were eliminated, and grotesque details of mere horror were struck out. The text of 1798 with the variants of 1800 is printed in Appendix B, p. 53. The poem was reprinted in the *Lyrical Ballads*, 1802 and 1805, with the omission of the Argument. Its next appearance was in *Sibylline Leaves*, 1817, with a few changes of text and the addition of the motto from Burnett and the marginal gloss. After this there were no changes of importance.

The text here printed is taken from the edition of Coleridge's Poetical Works published in 1829, "the last upon which he was able to bestow personal care and attention."

<sup>1</sup> Charles Lamb remarks in a letter to Wordsworth (January, 1801), "I am sorry that Coleridge has christened his *Ancient Marinere*, a *Poet's Reverie*; it is as bad as Bottom the Weaver's declaration that he is not a lion, but only the scenical representation of a lion. What new idea is gained by this title but one subversive of all credit — which the tale should force upon us — of its truth!"

## TRANSLATION OF THE MOTTO FROM BURNETT

I readily believe that in the universe are more invisible beings than visible. But who will expound to us the nature of them all, and their ranks and relationships and distinguishing characteristics and the functions of each? What is it they perform? What regions do they inhabit? Ever about the knowledge of these things circles the thought of man, never reaching it. Meanwhile it is pleasant, I must confess, sometimes to contemplate in the mind, as in a picture, the image of this greater and better world: that the mind, accustomed to the little things of daily life, may not be narrowed overmuch and lose itself in trivial reflections. But meanwhile must we diligently seek after truth, maintaining just measure, that we may distinguish things certain from uncertain, day from night.

## THE POEM

**Rime.** In its more familiar meaning, a word answering in sound to another word. Here used in the sense of a metrical composition, a tale in verse. Rime, derived from Anglo-Saxon *rīm*, is the proper spelling of the word more commonly written rhyme. The form rhyme, alternating with rhime, first used about the middle of the sixteenth century, arose from its confusion with the Greek word rhythm.

**The marginal notes or gloss.** Added, according to Wordsworth, as a "gratuitous afterthought." Such glosses are frequently supplied by editors of "texts," such as the old ballads, etc.<sup>1</sup> These notes should be read through once continuously, independently of the poem, as a single total composition.

- 1-4 The four-line stanza, made up of alternating four-stress and three-stress verses, is the typical stanza form of the poem; and also in the old ballads it is the form most frequently employed. The measure, although typically iambic (the iambic foot consists of one unaccented syllable followed by

<sup>1</sup> It is interesting to note that Shelvocke's *Voyage* is accompanied by a gloss. Edition, 1726.

an accented), admits many variations. The first line, with a secondary accent on "Mariner," and the fourth are strictly iambic; in the second and third lines notice that the first foot is anapaestic (two unaccented syllables followed by an accented).<sup>1</sup>

- 1 **It is.** The time of the action is not fixed. The poem is at once without definite geographical background and without date. Are there any indications in the poem of the mariner's nationality or of the period?

**Ancient.** Note the suggestively indeterminate value of the phrase. The seafarer is not merely old in years; his story comes down to us out of an earlier time. The phrase carries with it suggestions of "old, unhappy, far-off things"; it creates at once an atmosphere.

**Mariner.** In the text of 1798, **Marinere**. The form is retained in l. 517. Notice that the stress of the verse falls on the light last syllable. A mark of the genuine ballad manner is the "frequent retention of the Middle English accent on the final syllable in words like *countrié, rivére*, and its assumption by words which never properly had it, such as *ladý, harpér*, etc." — (BEERS, *English Romanticism*, p. 272.)

Cf. "And I feir, I feir, my deir master  
That we will cum to harme." — *Sir Patrick Spens*.

GUMMERE, *Old English Ballads*, p. 145. Cf. *post*, ll. 467, 518, and ll. 20, 517. Also, *Ballad of the Dark Ladié*.

- 2 **Stoppeth.** This early form of the third person singular is not so archaic as to be puzzling or grotesque, yet on the other hand it intensifies the atmosphere of antiquity which Coleridge throws about the poem.

**One of three.** Some see in the number of wedding-guests a mystical significance. Three happens, also, to be the rhyme-word of the stanza.

- 3 **By thy long grey beard.** Coleridge was not satisfied "merely with adopting the old-fashioned, popular forms of art, but he added to them all sorts of strange features of his own.

<sup>1</sup>For an explanation and illustration of the various metrical feet, see Coleridge's *Metrical Feet, Lesson for a Boy*. Written in 1803.

The Ancient Mariner, for example, swears [it is, however, the wedding-guest] by his 'grey beard' as if he were a Turk." — BRANDL, p. 204.

- Glittering eye.** It is a common notion that a peculiar light or gleam in the eye marks a man possessed. It is no ordinary sailor, then, who stops the wedding-guest, and his story will be a strange one. It is in keeping with the directness in the march of the story that the description of the mariner is made wholly incidental to the narrative.
- 5-9 The outlandishness of the mariner and his story is emphasized by the contrast with this picture of home-keeping happiness and comfortable festivity.
- 7 **The guests are met, the feast is set.** Note the "internal rhyme," a verse-form frequent in the ballad metre.
- 9 **Skinny hand.** Another indirect descriptive stroke. Notice how the poet fixes on the salient and suggestive details.
- 10 **There was a ship.** Note the immediateness, not to say bareness, of the narrative; there are no preliminaries, no elaborate introduction. The ship is flashed upon us entire and complete, though unadorned by any descriptive touches; and thus unannounced and coming from nowhere, it opens vistas of infinite possibilities.
- 11 **Loon.** Originally, stupid fellow, clown. Cf. *Macbeth*, "The devil damn thee black, thou cream-fac'd loon." As used by the wedding-guest, it is simply an opprobrious epithet, like dolt, fool, etc.
- 12 **Eftsoons.** At once, forthwith.
- 13-16 This stanza was furnished by Wordsworth.
- 21 **The ship was cheered,** etc. It is hardly necessary further to call attention to the swiftness of the narrative.
- 22 **Merrily did we drop.** Instead of an iambic or an anapæstic foot, we have here a dactyl. Notice how in the light movement of the dactyl the sound of the verse echoes the sense.
- 23 **Kirk.** Is this any clue to the geography of the poem? Or is it only a general name for church? Cf. *post*, l. 603. What was the religion of the Ancient Mariner? Collect the indications of it throughout the poem.
- Below the kirk, below the hill,** etc. Note the successive disappearance of landmarks as the ship stands out to sea.

- 25 **The Sun came up upon the left.** In what direction was the ship sailing?
- 28 **Went down into the sea.** With no pause in the narrative, they are now in mid-ocean.
- 30 **Over the mast at noon.** Where is the ship now?
- 32 **Bassoon.** "During Coleridge's residence in Stowey his friend Poole reformed the church choir, and added a bassoon to its resources. Mrs. Sanford (*T. Poole and his Friends*, i. 247) happily suggests that this 'was the very original and prototype of the "loud bassoon" whose sound moved the wedding-guest to beat his breast.' — CAMPBELL, *Coleridge's Poetical Works*, p. 597.
- 35 **Nodding their heads.** Cf. *Ballad of the Dark Ladié*:

"But first the nodding minstrels go  
With music meet for lordly bowers."

Also the *Monody on a Tea Kettle*, written while Coleridge was still at Christ's Hospital:

"Nodding their heads in all the pomp of woe."

- 36 **Minstrelsy.** Who were the minstrels originally? And just what does the poet mean here by minstrelsy?"
- Drawn** in the gloss is changed by Campbell into "driven."  
"Coleridge, I have no doubt, wrote *driven*, but in very small characters on the narrow margin of the *Lyrical Ballads*; the word was misprinted *drawn*, and the mistake was overlooked then and after. The two words, written or printed, are not easily distinguishable." — CAMPBELL, p. 597. In the Argument, as Dr. Garnett points out, the phrase is "How a ship . . . was driven by storms."
- 41 **Storm-blast.** Here the personification is very different from the eighteenth-century manner of "printer's devil" personification, the "easy magic of an initial capital," which reached its culmination in such a phrase as "Inoculation, heavenly maid, descend!" With something of the simplicity and the might of imagination of early peoples, the mariner personifies the forces of nature, endowing them with intelligence and will. In this, Coleridge departs from his prototype, the old ballad, in which figures of speech "in any artistic and intentional sort" are rare.

- 45-50 Notice here a new stanza form. It is unlike any other six-line stanza in the poem.
- 47 **Treads the shadow.** The ship is now so far south that it has the sun behind it; and moving still southward it pursues its own shadow.
- 50 **Aye.** Observe the pronunciation.

Cf. "Vain Philosophy's aye-babbling spring." — *Aeolian Harp*.

- 51 **And now there came both mist and snow.** With the details here it is interesting to compare the following data from the log of Captain Thomas James' "Strange and dangerous voyage . . . in his intended Discovery of the Northwest Passage into the South Sea: London, 1633," a book which Coleridge may very possibly have seen; a copy of it was in the Bristol Library, of which Coleridge was a "regular frequenter."

"All day and all night, it snowed hard;" "The nights are very cold; so that our rigging freezes;" "it proved very thicke foule weather, and the next day, by two a Clocke in the morning, we found ourselves incompassed about with Ice;" "We had Ice not farre off about us, and some pieces as high as our Top-mast-head;" "The seventeenth . . . we heard . . . the rutt against a banke of Ice that lay on the Shoare. It made a hollow and hideous noyse, like an overfall of water, which made us to reason amongst ourselves concerning it, for we were not able to see about us, it being darke night and foggie;" "The Ice . . . crackt all over the Bay, with a fearfull noyse;" "These great pieces that came a grounde began to breake with a most terrible thundering noyse;" "This morning . . . we . . . came to saile, steering betwixt great pieces of Ice that were a grounde in 40 fad., and twice as high as our Top-mast-head."

"There are many similar expressions, but here, perhaps, are more than enough to show that the correspondences are not accidental, especially as most of the contemporary Arctic explorers measured their icebergs by fathoms and not by their masts." — *Athenæum*, March 15, 1890.

Cf. l. 53: "And ice, mast-high, came floating by."

Professor Brandl says: "The poet's extensive reading about distant countries and seas stood him in good stead. In the 'Destiny of Nations' he had adopted the History of Greenland by Crantz in describing the drifting field of ice, where 'the white bear howls in agony.' Here in the 'Ancient Mariner' he transposed the scene to the South Pole, with 'snowy cliffs' and 'ice mast-high, as green as emerald,' and fearful cracking and splitting sounds." — *Coleridge*, p. 201.

55 **And through the drifts.** Compare Tennyson:—

"Beyond the lodge the city lies,  
Beneath its drift of smoke." — *Talking Oak*.

**Drifts** is used by Coleridge then in the sense of "driving clouds" of mist and snow.

**Cliffs.** A form of *cliffs*. Cf. Dryden:—

"I view the coast old Ennius once admired  
Where cliffs on either side their points display."

56 **Sheen.** Lustre.

57 **Nor shapes of men**, etc. For a striking parallel see the passage from Shelvocke, Appendix A, p. 50.

**Ken.** See, descry. In this sense, archaic.

62 **Swound.** Swoon. An obsolete form.

63 **Albatross.** A web-footed sea-bird of the petrel family. "Albatrosses inhabit the southern seas at large, and the whole Pacific ocean, but not the northern Atlantic. Some of them are the largest known sea-birds, and all are noted for their powers of flight, sailing for hours, and in any direction with reference to the wind, without visible movement of the wings. . . . From their habit of following ships for days together without resting, albatrosses are regarded with feelings of attachment and superstitious awe by sailors, it being considered unlucky to kill one." — *Century Dictionary*. In *English Note Books* Hawthorne mentions his visit to the Warwick Museum, where he saw an albatross "huge beyond imagination." And he adds, "I do not think that Coleridge could have known the size of the fowl when he caused it to be hung round the neck of his Ancient Mariner."

The episode of the albatross was suggested by Wordsworth, who borrowed it from Shelvocke's *Voyages*. The bird there mentioned was black and was considered of ill-omen because of his color. This detail of the color, which played an important part with Shelvocke and his men, Coleridge ignores altogether, possibly, as Dr. Garnett suggests, because he may never have seen the book, or else for artistic reasons. The fact that the bird was from his color naturally considered of ill-omen "greatly extenuates the slayer's offence." With this element omitted, then, the mariner is the more blameworthy, and more deserving of the spectral persecution.

64 **Thorough.** The early form of **through**.

**The fog.** Notice how in this and the preceding stanzas the poet keeps the attention fixed on the condition of sea and weather, after the first mention of the mist and snow.

65 **Christian soul.** In what sense is **soul** here used? Does the poet conceive the spirit of man as embodied and made visible in the bird? Or is **soul** simply another term for human being, person? Compare our familiar turn of speech, "She was a good soul." For the context to this passage refer to l. 57.

66 **Hailed.** Here in the sense of *welcomed*.

67 **Eat.** An old form of the past participle no longer in good use. As an illustration of the extent to which Coleridge improved upon the first form of the poem, contrast this felicitous line with the verse in the 1798 edition,

"The Mariners gave it biscuit-worms"!

69 **Thunder-fit.** A shock or noise resembling thunder. Here **fit** approaches its original meaning of *struggle*.

71 **A good south wind, etc.** The ship is now sailing north; the point at which it changed its course is not marked specifically. This method of implying action by dealing immediately with the results is characteristic of the ballad manner. We are given the inference; we must supply the premises. "The knight rides out a-hunting, and by and by his riderless horse comes home, and that is all:



'Toom [empty] hame cam the saddle  
But never cam he.' — BEERS, p. 275.

The action itself is taken for granted.

- 74 **Mariner's.** So in the editions of 1798, 1800, 1829. In the "New Edition" of 1852 the form is plural, **mariners'.**
- 75 **In mist or cloud.** The ice is broken, but the weather has not yet cleared. The continued presence of the fog and mist has a special significance with reference to the albatross. Cf. ll. 97-102.
- 76 **Vespers.** Evensong: here, metaphorically, for evenings. Possibly it is a plural built up on vesper, the evening star, and hence the evening.
- 79 **God save thee,** etc. Notice how the appearance of the mariner is suggested indirectly yet vividly by indicating its effect on the wedding-guest.
- 80 **Plague.** The word with us in the sense of *tease* has come to have a trivial suggestion. We should take it in the older meaning of harass, trouble. Cf. *Macbeth*:—

"We but teach  
Bloody instructions, which being taught return  
To plague the inventor."

- 81 **Cross-bow.** How far is this a clue to the period of the poem?  
"The Cross-bow was used by the English soldiers chiefly at sieges of fortified places, and on ship-board, in battles upon the sea." — STRUTT, *Sports and Pastimes.*
- 79-82 The closing stanza of the first part strikes the key-note of the poem. The mariner's crime is stated explicitly, and suggested is the long spectral persecution.
- 83-86 Notice the virtual repetition of an earlier stanza (ll. 25-28), yet with essential variation. The details here reënforce the indication in l. 71 as to the direction in which the ship is sailing. These repetitions of phrase are characteristic of the ballad manner. Cf. *Mary Hamilton*:—

"O Marie, put on your robes o black,  
Or else your robes o brown,  
For ye maun gang wi me the night,  
To see fair Edinbro town."

“‘I winna put on my robes o black,  
 Nor yet my robes o brown;  
 But I'll put on my robes o white,  
 To shine through Edinbro town.’”

— GUMMERE, p. 159.

- 85 **Still hid in mist.** Note the continued insistence on this detail.
- 87-90 Again the virtual repetition, yet with change. Here the variation introduced is the contrast of the mariner's present loneliness with the former companionship of the albatross.
- 91-96 This six-line stanza, rimed differently from stanza 45-50, is the type of the six-line *stānza* used in the poem: the first, third, and fifth verses are unrimed, the second and fourth are rimed, and the sixth repeats the rime-word of the fourth.
- 97 **Nor dim nor red.** Now the fog and the mist have cleared away; the albatross, then, was associated in the mariner's mind with foul weather. Notice that the comma after “red” has, as it were, the force of “but.”
- 98 **Uprist, rose.** An old form. Cf. Chaucer:—

“Floures fresshe, honouren ye this day  
 For, when the sunne uprist, then wol ye sprede.”

- 104 **The furrow followed free.** In *Sibylline Leaves* the line was changed to read, “The furrow streamed off free.” In a footnote Coleridge remarked: “In the former edition the line was — ‘The furrow followed free’; but I had not been long on board a ship before I perceived that this was the image as seen by a spectator from the shore, or from another vessel. From the ship itself the *Wake* appears like a brook flowing off from the stern.” When Coleridge wrote *The Ancient Mariner* he had never been at sea. By 1817 he had crossed to Germany and he had made a long voyage to Malta. In the *Collected Works* of 1828 the earlier and unquestionably more musical line was restored. These changes suggest the interesting question as to how far a poet is justified in sacrificing fidelity of observation to metrical effect.
- 106 **That silent sea.** It is not until this point that the really miraculous begins. “The tricks and fantasies of super-

naturalism are meaningless and powerless save in alliance with the mysterious powers of human nature [cf. the citation from Newman, *post*, p. 36], and, failing this, not all the realistic circumstance in the world can give them life or meaning. And where this alliance between the evil within and the unknown powers without is less marked, the care wherewith a great romancer prepares the way for the supernatural, so that it comes as the bodily fulfillment of an unbodied fear, is well seen in the palmary instance of *The Ancient Mariner*. The skeleton ship, with the spectre-woman and her death-mate, is ushered in by all the silences and wonders of a tropical sea, by loneliness and dreams."—RALEIGH, *The English Novel*, p. 223. Compare the citation from Watson, *ante*, pp. li–liii.

- 113 **Right above the mast.** Where is the ship now?
- 114 **No bigger than the Moon.** "Is it possible that the poet did not know the apparent diameter of the moon to be greater than that of the sun?"—POE, *Marginalia*. It is possible. It is possible as well that the poet did know that the apparent diameter of the moon is greater than that of the sun, and by a stroke of art, appealed not to what is true but to what people commonly suppose to be true. We know the sun to be actually many times larger than the moon, and unless we observe closely, we naturally infer that of course the sun *looks* larger. Hence the simile, appealing to the familiar though untrue, is more effective than if it adhered to a truth but little known.
- 125 **Slimy things.** "In these monsters he [Coleridge] seems to have taken particular interest, and to have consulted various zoological works; for the note-book of this date contains long paragraphs upon the alligators, boas, and crocodiles of antediluvian times."—BRANDL, p. 202.
- 127 **About, about, etc.** Possibly an echo of *Macbeth*:—

"The weird sisters, hand in hand,  
Posters of the sea and land,  
Thus do go about, about:  
Thrice to thine, and thrice to mine,  
And thrice again, to make up nine.  
Peace! the charm's wound up."

**Reel.** A lively dance, consisting of various circling or inter-twining figures.

**Rout.** A troop, a band, a company.

128 **Death-fires.** Electrical appearances about the rigging of ships, supposed to presage death.

Cf.

“Mighty armies of the dead  
Dance like death-fires round her tomb.”

— *Ode on the Departing Year.*

132 **Spirit.** Note especially the gloss. The spirit was a “demon,” that is, “one of the invisible inhabitants of this planet, neither departed souls, nor angels.” In the gloss to ll. 393 ff., the two spirits are characterized as the “Polar Spirit’s fellow-demons.” Cf. also the gloss to ll. 345 ff. It is interesting to note what Cardinal Newman held as to the existence of angels and demons. In the first chapter of his *Apologia*, he says: “I viewed them [the angels], not only as the ministers employed by the Creator in the Jewish and Christian dispensations . . . but as carrying on . . . the Economy of the Visible World. I considered them as the real causes of motion, light, and life, and of those elementary principles of the physical universe, which . . . suggest to us the notion of cause and effect, and of what are called the laws of nature . . . . I say of the Angels, ‘Every breath of air and ray of light and heat, every beautiful prospect, is, as it were, the skirts of their garments, the waving of the robes of those whose faces see God.’ Again, I ask what would be the thoughts of a man who, ‘when examining a flower, or a herb, or a pebble, or a ray of light . . . suddenly discovered that he was in the presence of some powerful being who was hidden behind the visible thing he was inspecting, — who, though concealing his wise hand, was giving them their beauty, grace, and perfection, as being God’s instrument for the purpose . . . ?’ . . . Also, besides the hosts of evil spirits, I considered there was a middle race, *δαιμόνια*, neither in heaven, nor in hell; partially fallen, capricious, wayward; noble or crafty, benevolent or malicious, as the case might be.” It is on a similar

belief or conception, a kind of pantheism, that Coleridge constructs the supernaturalism of his poem.

- 133 **Nine.** Perhaps chosen for its mystical significance. Cf. "vespers nine." See also the verses from *Macbeth*, *ante*, p. 35.

- 139 **Well-a-day.** A variation of wellaway; an exclamation of grief or sorrow. It is often found in the old ballads.

- 141 **Instead of the cross, etc.** The meaning here is not clear. It may be that the mariner, as a Catholic, wore a cross about his neck, and that his fellow seamen removed this cross, and hung upon him instead, the albatross. Or, the passage may contain an allusion to a mediæval custom. In the Middle Ages, Jews, lepers, heretics, etc., were obliged to wear some conspicuous mark of infamy:—the Jews had a large "wheel," or ring, of colored cloth, sewn on the garment; the lepers wore a special dress; and heretics were marked with two crosses, of different color from their clothes, sewn upon the breast. Hence the wearing of some special kind of cross might perhaps in the period represented in the poem have been imposed upon offenders as a punishment; and the mariner may mean here that instead of the cross of infamy, the sailors hung about his neck the albatross, as a more appropriate mark of his ignominy. That the bird was meant to be the token of his guilt as well as a mere punishment seems to be borne out by the gloss to the passage. Finally, it is possible that Coleridge had in mind a blending of all this, or, on the other hand, that he intended no allusion to any custom, but simply hit upon the incident as a picturesque and impressive detail.

- 143-148 Notice that in this stanza it is the second and sixth verses which are rimed, and the fourth verse repeats the rime-word of the second.

- 152 **I wist.** Preterit of the verb, *wit*, to know, become aware. Cf. the phrase, "to wit," *i.e.*, "namely," and the French equivalent, *à savoir*.

- 149-156 Note the precision of observation, the specific quality of the phrasing, and the suggestion of the sense by the sound of the verse.

- 157-161 Here is a stanza form not before used in the poem.

The fourth verse is made to rime with the third, and the fifth rimes with the second.

- 164 **Gramercy.** From *grand merci*; literally, "many thanks." An interjection expressing thankfulness, sometimes mingled with surprise.

**They for joy did grin.** Coleridge remarks: "I took the thought of *grinning for joy* from my companion's remark to me, when we had climbed to the top of Plinlimmon, and were nearly dead with thirst. We could not speak from the constriction, till we found a little puddle under a stone. He said to me: 'You grinned like an idiot!' He had done the same." — *Table Talk*, May 31, 1830.

- 166 **As they were drinking,** *i.e.*, as *if* they were, etc.

- 168 **Weal.** Originally, wealth, prosperity: here, well-being. It is used at present chiefly in phrases, as, weal or woe, common weal, public weal, etc.

- 169 **Without a breeze,** etc. Some had in dreams been assured of the spirit that was pursuing them (Cf. ll. 131 ff.); here is the first immediate and undoubted manifestation of supernatural agencies.

- 170 **Steadies.** A nautical term: to remain in an upright position.

- 178 **Heaven's Mother.** What does this ejaculation imply with regard to the mariner? Cf. l. 294.

- 184 **Gossameres.** "A fine filmy substance, consisting of cobweb formed by various small spiders. . . . It is seen in stubble-fields and on low bushes, and also floating in the air in calm, clear weather, especially in autumn. Threads of gossamer are often spun out into the air, several yards in length, till catching a breeze, they lift the spider and carry it on a long aerial voyage." — *Century Dictionary*. "The old legend says, that these are the remains of the Virgin Mary's winding-sheet, which fell from her when she was translated." — GEORGE, *Ancient Mariner*. Cf. the French term for gossamer, *fil de la vierge*. In literature, the gossamer is the symbol of lightness and insubstantiality. Cf. *Romeo and Juliet*: —

"A lover may bestride the gossamer  
That idles in the wanton summer air,  
And yet not fall; so light is vanity."

185 **Her ribs.** What is implied in this? Cf. "The naked hulk," l. 195.

188 **A Death.** A figure of death, a skeleton.

190-194 This is the only five-line stanza in which the first verse is rimed.

187-197. The symbolism here hardly needs explanation.

193 **Life-in-Death.** For a significant allusion to this verse, cf. the *Epitaph* which Coleridge composed the year before his death:—

"O, lift one thought in prayer for S. T. C.;  
That he who many a year with toil of breath  
Found death in life, may here find life in death!"

196 **Twain.** An archaic form of two.

197 The obvious misprint in *Sibylline Leaves* and in the edition of 1829—"The game is done! I've, I've won!"—is here corrected.

200 **At one stride comes the dark.** "Between the tropics there is no twilight. As the sun's last segment dips down, and the evening gun is fired, the constellations appear arrayed." Marginal note by Coleridge, quoted by Dr. Garnett. Cf. especially the gloss. Also Kipling:—

"An' the dawn comes up like thunder outer China  
'crost the Bay!" — *Mandalay*.

203-211 Note the nine-line stanza, the only one in the poem.

201-210 "Among some papers of Coleridge dated variously from 1806, 1807, and 1810, there exists undated, the following recast of these lines:—

"With never a whisper on the main  
Off shot the spectre ship:  
And stifled words and groans of pain  
Mix'd on each <sup>murmuring</sup> trembling lip.

And we look'd round, and we look'd up,  
And fear at our hearts, as at a cup,  
The Life-blood seem'd to sip—  
The sky was dull, and dark the night,  
The helmsman's face by his lamp gleam'd bright,  
From the sails the dews did drip—  
Till clomb above the Eastern Bar,  
The horned moon, with one bright star  
Within its nether tip.'"—CAMPBELL, p. 598.

212 **The star-dogged Moon.** "It is a common superstition among sailors that something evil is about to happen whenever a star dogs the moon."—Manuscript note by Coleridge. Campbell remarks, "But no sailor ever saw a star within the nether tip of a horned moon."

220 **The souls did from their bodies fly, etc.** For a similar conception of the soul as having form, compare Rossetti:—

"And the souls mounting up to God  
Went by her like thin flames."

—*The Blessed Damozel.*

226-7 "For the two last lines of this stanza, I am indebted to Mr. Wordsworth. It was on a delightful walk from Nether Stowey to Dulverton, with him and his sister, in the Autumn of 1797, that this Poem was planned, and in part composed." Coleridge's note.

245 **Or ever.** Before ever.

284 **A spring of love gushed from my heart.** Lamb wrote to Southey in November, 1798, "If you wrote that review in the *Critical Review*, I am sorry you are so sparing of praise to the *Ancient Marinere*. So far from calling it as you do, with some wit, but more severity, a 'Dutch Attempt,' etc., I call it a right English attempt, and a successful one, to dethrone German sublimity. You have selected a passage fertile in unmeaning miracles, but have passed by fifty passages as miraculous as the miracles they celebrate. I never so deeply felt the pathetic as in that part,

"A spring of love gush'd from my heart,  
And I bless'd them unaware."

It stung me into high pleasure through sufferings."

If the poem has a purpose, and that purpose is to teach the saving power of love,—the lesson set forth in the closing stanzas,—then that lesson is unmistakably foreshadowed here. Here, too, is the culmination of the mariner's sufferings which resulted from the spectral persecution; and here is the turning-point in the action of the poem.

289 **So free.** In the sense of "thus freed."

Notice that in all this Fourth Part, the part where the feeling is intensest, the diction is simplest, calling for the



least comment. The supreme mark of real intensity and perfect sincerity is perfect simplicity.

292 Sleep. Cf. *Christabel*:—

“For she belike hath drunken deep  
Of all the blessedness of sleep.”

To the mystery of sleep and the haunting influence of dreams Coleridge was peculiarly sensitive.

Cf. *Christabel*:—

“But though my slumber was gone by,  
This dream it would not pass away—  
It seems to live upon mine eye!”

and—

“With such perplexity of mind  
As dreams too lively leave behind.”

Cf. also *Something Childish, but very Natural*:—

“Sleep stays not, though a monarch bids:  
So I love to wake ere break of day:  
For though my sleep be gone,  
Yet while 'tis dark, one shuts one's lids,  
And still dreams on.”

His special sensitiveness was undoubtedly due in part to opium. Later, when the habit had mastered him, sleep was no longer exquisite delight, no longer a blessing, but rather torture. In a letter he exclaims, “Pray for me, my dear friend, that I may not pass such another night as the last. When I am awake and retain my reasoning powers, the pang is gnawing; but I am, except for a fitful moment or two, tranquil: it is the howling wilderness of sleep that I dread.”

Cf. *The Pains of Sleep*:—

“The night's dismay  
Saddened and stunned the coming day.  
Sleep, the wide blessing, seemed to me  
Distemper's worst calamity.”

Here in *The Ancient Mariner* “Life-in-Death” is a “Nightmare,” and it is interesting to recall that the whole poem had as its starting-point a dream. Indeed the work of Coleridge's “poetic prime,” *The Ancient Mariner*, *Kubla Khan*, and *Christabel*, is as—

“A dream remembered in a dream.”

297 **Silly.** Originally, fortunate, blessed, then innocent, then weak, impotent and useless, as here; finally, simple, foolish.

298 **So.** In the sense of thus. Cf. l. 289.

302 **Dank.** Damp, saturated with cold moisture. Cf. *Henry IV*, Part I: "Dank as a dog."

308 **Blessed ghost.** A spirit in heaven. Ghost originally meant the breath, the soul of man. This meaning is preserved for us in the phrase, "to give up the ghost." In the sense of spirit, as the poet uses the word here, we have the word in the phrase, "the Holy Ghost." Our common use to-day limits the word to spectre, apparition.

312 **Sere.** Or sear. Dry. Usually applied to vegetation.

314 **Fire-flags.** Flashes or gleams of lightning.

**Sheen.** Here an adjective modifying **fire-flags**. Cf. l. 56, for the noun-form of the word.

319 **Sedge.** Rushes, flags, tall grasses.

335 ff. The navigation of the ship by the dead men was suggested by Wordsworth.

354 **Around, around, flew each sweet sound.** So acutely sensitive are the mariner's perceptions that the sounds in which the angelic spirits take form he can almost *see* as they "dart" to the sun.

358-372 This recall of home sounds, of pleasant country ways, of the voices of birds and woods and brooks, is inexpressibly affecting. As in a dream or transport, the mariner escapes from immediate reality, and the music of the spirit-troop is a glimpse into heaven.

395 **Living life.** In distinction from what other life? Cf. "bodily life," gloss to l. 230. The idea is reënforced by the phrase, "in my soul," l. 396.

399 **By Him who died on cross.** From this affirmation it would seem that the demons were in the service of God and the heavenly powers.

407 **Honey-dew.** Cf. *Kubla Khan*:—

"For he on honey dew hath fed  
And drunk the milk of Paradise."

"The name is properly applied to the sugary secretion from the leaves of plants, occurring most frequently in hot

weather. It usually appears as small glistening drops, but if particularly abundant may drip from the leaves in considerable quantity, when it has been called *manna*."—*Science*, III, 737.

414 **Still as a slave.** Cf. Coleridge's *Osorio*:—

"O woman!

I have stood silent like a slave before thee."

416 **His great bright eye.** The figure here may have been suggested by a stanza of Sir John Davies:—

"For lo the *sea* that fleets about the land,  
And like a girdle clips her solid waist,  
Music and measure both doth understand:  
For his great chrystal eye is always cast  
Up to the moon, and on her fixed fast."

—*Orchestra*; or *A Poem on Dancing*.

Davies' poem was licensed in 1593 and published in 1596. **Trance**, in marginal note 422. If Coleridge read Captain James' *Voyage*, the following passage was probably not without its suggestion; "For mine owne part, I give no credit to them at all [*i.e.* the fables told by 'some *Portingales*, that should have come this way out of the South Sea']; and as little to the vicious, and abusive wits of later *Portingals* and *Spaniards*: who never speak of any difficulties: as shoalde water, Ice, nor sight of land; but as if they had been brought home in a dreame or engine."

446-451 In the essay on *Witches, and Other Night Fears*, Lamb remarks: "Gorgons, and Hydras, and Chimæras dire—stories of Celæno and the Harpies—may reproduce themselves in the brain of superstition—but they were there before. They are transcripts, types—the archetypes are in us, and eternal. How else should the recital of that, which we know in a waking sense to be false, come to affect us at all? . . . Is it that we naturally conceive terror from such objects, considered in their capacity of being able to inflict upon us bodily injury?—O, least of all! These terrors are of older standing. They date beyond body—or, without the body, they would have been the same. All the

cruel, tormenting, defined devils in Dante . . . are they one half so fearful to the spirit of a man, as the simple idea of a spirit unembodied following him — ‘Like one that on a lonesome road’ [here he quotes the stanza]. That the kind of fear here treated of is purely spiritual — that it is strong in proportion as it is objectless upon earth — that it predominates in the period of sinless infancy — are difficulties, the solution of which might afford some probable insight into our ante-mundane condition, and a peep at least into the shadow land of preëxistence.”

465 **The light-house top**, etc. Notice that these details are enumerated here in reverse order from ll. 23-4.

467 **Own countree**. A form common in the old ballads.

470 **O let me be awake**. *I.e.* may this prove to be actual and real. Or, if it be a dream, let me dream on forever.

472 ff. Notice the mariner’s extreme sensitiveness to all impressions. He discriminates among “tones” in color and light; so acute are his senses that even the very absence of sound has a positive value, smiting upon his nerves actively. Cf. “The moonlight steeped in silentness;” “white with silent light;” “the silence sank like music on my heart.”

489 **Rood**. Cross.

490 **A man all light, a seraph-man**. Seraphs are the “burning or flaming angels, consisting of or like fire, and associated with the ideas of light, ardor, and purity.” — *Century Dictionary*.

Cf. Milton: “The flaming seraph, fearless, though alone.”

Also Pope: “The rapt seraph that adores and burns.”

507 **Blast**. A striking use of the word.

512 **Shrieve**. An old form of *shrive*. To receive a confession from a penitent and grant absolution.

524 **Trow**. Believe, think.

532 Note here the “run-on” verse, carrying over into the next stanza. Even within the stanza the “run-on” verse is “a rare occurrence in ballad metre.” — GUMMERE, p. 353.

535 **The ivy-tod**. The ivy-bush.

612 ff., **He prayeth well, who loveth well**, etc. With these lines we come upon the perplexing question of the “purpose” or the moral of the poem. On this point Coleridge himself re-

marked: "Mrs. Barbauld once told me that she admired the *Ancient Mariner* very much, but that there were two faults in it — it was improbable, and had no moral. As for the probability, I owned that that might admit some question; but as to the want of a moral, I told her that in my own judgment the poem had too much; and that the only or chief fault, if I might say so, was the obtrusion of the moral sentiment so openly on the reader as a principle or cause of action in a work of such pure imagination. It ought to have had no more moral than the *Arabian Nights'* tale of the merchant's sitting down to eat dates by the side of a well, and throwing the shells aside, and lo! a genie starts up, and says he *must* kill the aforesaid merchant *because* one of the date shells had, it seems, put out the eye of the genie's son." — *Table Talk*, May 31, 1830.

That Coleridge had little sympathy with the "moral" is further shown in his note on the concluding lines of his poem, *The Raven*, in which he handles the same theme as that of *The Ancient Mariner*, the revenge executed by lesser creatures for injuries done them by man. To the closing line of the poem, "REVENGE WAS SWEET," Coleridge added in the *Sibylline Leaves* the lines: —

" [We must not think so, but forget and forgive,  
And what Heaven gives life to, we'll still let it live! ] "

The couplet expresses the same sentiment as the conclusion of *The Ancient Mariner*. But against these lines, on the margin of a copy of *Sibylline Leaves*, Coleridge wrote: "Added thro' cowardly fear of the Goody! What a Hollow, where the Heart of Faith ought to be, does it not betray — this alarm concerning Christian morality, that will not permit even a Raven to be a Raven, nor a Fox a Fox, but demands conventicular justice to be inflicted on their unchristian conduct, or at least an antidote to be annexed." We may further note that "one of the most persistent features of the German literature of the romantic revival [the German movement influenced the English] — perhaps its greatest blemish — is its fondness for the obvious moral. This really springs from a double sense: first a love of the

copy book maxim as the inspiring idea of a poem, and secondly, a love of obviousness that prevents the artist from letting facts speak for themselves, and leads him constantly to trespass on the domain of the moral aphorist."<sup>1</sup> If such was the temper of the time, it may be that Coleridge made concessions to it more or less unconsciously.

On the other hand, the lesson of *The Ancient Mariner*, the lesson of love and sympathy for the lesser creatures, is taught in Coleridge's lines *To a Young Ass*, and the sentiment finds expression in many of his other early poems. Again, "Are not cattle and plants," he asks, "permeated through and through with the Divinity who has created all things to form one harmonious whole?" Finally, and this is the weightiest testimony in support of his fundamental and conscious seriousness of purpose in *The Ancient Mariner*, he wrote in the *Biographia Literaria* that no private feeling should prevent his publishing his autobiography "if continued reflection should strengthen my present belief, that my history would add its contingent to the enforcement of one important truth, to wit, that we must not only love our neighbors as ourselves, but ourselves likewise as our neighbors; and that we can do neither unless we love God above both" — Chap. XXIV.

Some critics maintain that *The Ancient Mariner* is an allegory, and they try to read into it subtle and far-sought meanings. But the poem has its meaning in the measure with which it is able to impress each reader for himself with its power and beauty, and to stir and quicken him; for he should remember what Coleridge himself tells us, that poetry has for its immediate object pleasure, not truth. The highest poetry is written primarily, not to inculcate a lesson, but to open to the human spirit the inexhaustible treasure of the "loveliness and the wonders of the world before us."

<sup>1</sup> W. W. GREG, *English Translations of Lenore, Modern Quarterly of Language and Literature*. August, 1899.

## APPENDIX A

### RELATIVE TO THE COMPOSITION AND SOURCES OF THE POEM

On the composition of *The Ancient Mariner* Wordsworth has left the following note:—

“In the autumn of 1797, he [Coleridge], my sister, and myself, started from Alfoxden pretty late in the afternoon, with a view to visit Linton, and the Valley of Stones near to it; and as our united funds were very small, we agreed to defray the expense of the tour by writing a poem, to be sent to the ‘New Monthly Magazine.’ . . . Accordingly we set off, and proceeded, along the Quantock Hills, towards Watchet; and in the course of this walk was planned the poem of the ‘Ancient Mariner,’ founded on a dream, as Mr. Coleridge said, of his friend Mr. Cruikshank. Much the greatest part of the story was Mr. Coleridge’s invention, but certain parts I suggested; for example, some crime was to be committed which should bring upon the Old Navigator, as Coleridge afterwards delighted to call him, the spectral persecution, as a consequence of that crime and his own wanderings. I had been reading in Shelvocke’s ‘Voyages,’ a day or two before, that, while doubling Cape Horn, they frequently saw albatrosses in that latitude, the largest sort of sea fowl, some extending their wings twelve or thirteen feet. ‘Suppose,’ said I, ‘you represent him as having killed one of these birds on entering the South Sea, and that the tutelary spirits of these regions take upon them to avenge the crime.’ The incident was thought fit for the purpose, and adopted accordingly. I also suggested the navigation of the ship by the dead men, but do not recollect that I had anything more to do with the scheme of the poem. The gloss with which it was subsequently accompanied was not thought of by either of us at the time, at least not a hint of it was given to me, and I have no doubt it was a gratuitous after-thought. We began the composi-

tion together on that to me memorable evening: I furnished two or three lines at the beginning of the poem, in particular —

“ ‘And listen’d like a three years’ child:

The Mariner had his will.’

These trifling contributions, all but one, which Mr. C. has with unnecessary scrupulosity recorded, slipped out of his mind, as well they might. As we endeavoured to proceed conjointly (I speak of the same evening), our respective manners proved so widely different, that it would have been quite presumptuous in me to do anything but separate from an undertaking upon which I could only have been a clog. . . . The ‘Ancient Mariner’ grew and grew till it became too important for our first object, which was limited to our expectation of five pounds; and we began to think of a volume which was to consist, as Mr. Coleridge has told the world, of poems chiefly on supernatural subjects, taken from common life, but looked at, as much as might be, through an imaginative medium.” — *Fenwick Note, Memoirs of William Wordsworth*, London, 1851, vol. I, pp. 107–8.

Wordsworth’s note, stating the facts about the composition of *The Ancient Mariner*, should be supplemented by Coleridge’s account of the literary significance of the poem:—

“During the first year that Mr. Wordsworth and I were neighbours, our conversations turned frequently on the two cardinal points of poetry, the power of exciting the sympathy of the reader by a faithful adherence to the truth of nature, and the power of giving the interest of novelty by the modifying colours of imagination. The sudden charm, which accidents of light and shade, which moonlight or sunset, diffused over a known and familiar landscape, appeared to represent the practicability of combining both. These are the poetry of nature. The thought suggested itself (to which of us I do not recollect) that a series of poems might be composed of two sorts. In the one, the incidents and agents were to be, in part at least, supernatural; and the excellence aimed at was to consist in the interesting of the affections by the dramatic truth of such emotions, as would naturally accompany such situations, supposing them real. And real in this sense they have been to every human being who, from whatever source of delusion, has at any time believed himself under supernatural agency. For the second class, subjects were to be chosen



from ordinary life; the characters and incidents were to be such as will be found in every village and its vicinity where there is a meditative and feeling mind to seek after them, or to notice them when they present themselves.

"In this idea originated the plan of the 'Lyrical Ballads'; in which it was agreed that my endeavours should be directed to persons and characters supernatural, or at least romantic; yet so as to transfer from our inward nature a human interest and a semblance of truth sufficient to procure for these shadows of imagination that willing suspension of disbelief for the moment, which constitutes poetic faith. Mr. Wordsworth, on the other hand, was to propose to himself as his object, to give the charm of novelty to things of every day, and to excite a feeling analogous to the supernatural, by awakening the mind's attention from the lethargy of custom, and directing it to the loveliness and the wonders of the world before us; an inexhaustible treasure, but for which, in consequence of the film of familiarity and selfish solicitude, we have eyes, yet see not, ears that hear not, and hearts that neither feel nor understand.

"With this view I wrote the 'Ancient Mariner,' and was preparing, among other poems, the 'Dark Ladie,' and the 'Christabel,' in which I should have more nearly realized my ideal than I had done in my first attempt. But Mr. Wordsworth's industry had proved so much more successful, and the number of his poems so much greater, that my compositions, instead of forming a balance, appeared rather an interpolation of heterogeneous matter. Mr. Wordsworth added two or three poems written in his own character, in the impassioned, lofty, and sustained diction which is characteristic of his genius. In this form the Lyrical Ballads were published."—*Biographia Literaria*, Chap. XIV.

Further details are contained in the following letter by the Rev. Alexander Dyce to H. N. Coleridge:—

"When my truly honoured friend Mr. Wordsworth was last in London, soon after the appearance of De Quincey's papers in 'Tait's Magazine,' he dined with me in Gray's Inn, and made the following statement, which, I am quite sure, I give you correctly: "The Ancient Mariner" was founded on a strange dream, which a friend of Coleridge had, who fancied he saw a skeleton ship, with figures in it. We had both determined to write some poetry for a monthly magazine, the profits of which were to defray the ex-

penses of a little excursion we were to make together. "The Ancient Mariner" was intended for this periodical, but was too long. I had very little share in the composition of it, for I soon found that the style of Coleridge and myself would not assimilate. Besides the lines (in the fourth part),

"And thou art long, and lank, and brown,  
As is the ribbed sea-sand,"

I wrote the stanza (in the first part),

"He holds him with his glittering eye —  
The Wedding-Guest stood still,  
And listens like a three years' child:  
The Mariner hath his will,"

and four or five lines more in different parts of the poem, which I could not now point out. The idea of "*shooting an albatross*" was mine; for I had been reading *Shelvocke's Voyages*, which probably Coleridge never saw. I also suggested the reanimation of the dead bodies, to work the ship." — Note to *The Ancient Mariner* in New Edition of Poems, 1852.

The book referred to by Wordsworth is *A Voyage Round the World By the Way of the Great South Sea, Performed in the Years 1719, 20, 21, 22, in the Speedwell of London, etc., By Captain George Shelvocke, etc., London, 1726*. The significant passages are as follows:—

"From the latitude of 40 deg. [south] to the latitude of 52 deg. 30 min. [south] we had a sight of continual shoals of seals and penguins, and were constantly attended by *Pintado* birds, about the bigness of a pigeon. . . . These were accompanied by *Albitrosses*, the largest sort of sea-fowls, some of them extending their wings 12 or 13 foot." — pp. 59–60.

"The cold is certainly much more insupportable in these, than in the same latitudes to the *Northward*; for, although we were pretty much advanced in the summer season, and had the days very long, yet we had continual squalls of sleet, snow and rain, and the heavens were perpetually hid from us by gloomy dismal clouds. In short, one would think it impossible that any living thing could subsist in so rigid a climate; and, indeed, we all observed, that we had not the sight of one fish of any kind, since we were come to the Southward of the streights of *le Mair*, nor one sea-

bird, except a disconsolate black *Albitross*, who accompanied us for several days, hovering about us as if he had lost himself, till Hatley, (my second Captain) observing, in one of his melancholy fits, that this bird was always hovering near us, imagin'd, from his colour, that it might be some ill omen. That which, I suppose, induced him the more to encourage his superstition, was the continued series of contrary tempestuous winds, which had oppress'd us ever since we had got into this sea. But be that as it would, he, after some fruitless attempts, at length, shot the *Albitross*, not doubting (perhaps) that we should have a fair wind after it. I must own, that this navigation is truly melancholy, and was the more so to us, who were by ourselves without a companion, which would have somewhat diverted our thoughts from the reflection of being in such a remote part of the world." — pp. 72–3.

Still another source from which Coleridge probably drew incidents and suggestions for his poem is the Epistle of Paulinus, Bishop of Nola, in the latter half of the fourth century, addressed by him to Micarius the vice-prefect of Rome. The letter tells the story of a vessel laden with corn, which having been stranded on the coast of Lucania, had been rescued from the perils of the deep by the Almighty himself. The ship, which had been wrecked near Sardinia, had been deserted by all the crew, except an old man who was left at the pump. "The old man, who knew nothing of what had happened, felt the vessel pitching and rolling, and coming up from the hold found there was no object in view but the sea and the sky. The feeling of loneliness increased the terror which the perils that surrounded him naturally inspired. Six whole days and nights he passed without breaking bread . . . and longing only for death to close the dreary scene." But the Lord gave him "new life with the food of His word." When he roused himself to work the ship, he "saw that angelic hands were busy about his task." "Nothing was left for the mariner to do but to sit admiring while his labour was forestalled by invisible hands. . . . Sometimes indeed it was vouchsafed to him to behold an armed band — one may suppose of heavenly soldiers — who kept their watches on the deck and acted in all points as seamen. What crew indeed but a crew of angels was worthy to work that vessel which was steered by the Pilot of the world? At the helm sat our dear Lord." At length the ship made an end of its course on the Lucanian shore.

Inspired by the Lord, "some fishermen put forth from land; they were in two small boats, and seeing the ship in the offing, were in the utmost terror and attempted to fly. . . . With loud and repeated shouts the old man called them back; they took counsel with each other, and, the Lord inspiring them, they understood they might approach the vessel without fear." They finally towed the vessel into the harbor. — *Gentlemen's Magazine*, Oct. 1853.

Coleridge's possible indebtedness to Captain James' *Voyage* is set forth in the Notes on the poem (*ante*, p. 30); for further details see Brandl, *Coleridge*, pp. 197–204.

On the "study of sources" Coleridge himself set little value. In the Preface to *Christabel* he says, "There is amongst us a set of critics, who seem to hold, that every possible thought and image is traditional; who have no notion that there are such things as fountains in the world, small as well as great; and who would therefore charitably derive every rill they behold flowing, from a perforation made in some other man's tank."

The scientific method in the study of literature needs here no vindication. We have only to remember that its ultimate value lies in imparting a knowledge which enables us to apprehend in some measure the wonders of the undiscoverable and transcendent power we call genius.

## APPENDIX B

THE TEXT OF 1798

### THE RIME OF THE ANCYENT MARINERE, IN SEVEN PARTS<sup>1</sup>

#### ARGUMENT<sup>2</sup>

How a Ship having passed the Line was driven by Storms to the cold Country towards the South Pole; and how from thence she made her course to the tropical Latitude of the Great Pacific Ocean; and of the strange things that befell; and in what manner the Ancyent Marinere came back to his own Country.

It is an ancyent Marinere,<sup>3</sup>

And he stoppeth one of three :

“By thy long grey beard and thy glittering eye

“Now wherefore stoppest me ?

5

“The Bridegroom’s doors are open’d wide

“And I am next of kin ;

“The Guests are met, the Feast is set, —

“May’st hear the merry din.

<sup>1</sup>In 1800, the title was changed to *The Ancient Mariner, A Poet’s Reverie*.

<sup>2</sup>The Argument in 1800 read: How a Ship having first sailed to the Equator, was driven by Storms, to the cold Country towards the South Pole; how the Ancient Mariner, cruelly, and in contempt of the laws of hospitality, killed a Sea-bird; and how he was followed by many strange Judgements; and in what manner he came back to his own Country.

<sup>3</sup>In the text of 1800, most of the extreme archaisms in spelling, words, and phrases, disappeared. *Ancyent* became *Ancient*, “*ne breath ne motion*” (l. 112) was changed to “*nor breath nor motion*”; “*withouten wind*” (l. 161) became “*without a breeze*,” etc. The more important changes in the text are given in the footnotes.

But still he holds the wedding-guest —

10       There was a Ship, quoth he —

“Nay, if thou’st got a laughsome tale,

“Marinere! come with me.”

He holds him with his skinny hand,

Quoth he, there was a Ship —

15       “Now get thee hence, thou grey-beard Loon

“Or my Staff shall make thee skip.

He holds him with his glittering eye —

The wedding guest stood still

And listens like a three year’s child ;

20       The Marinere hath his will.

The wedding guest sate on a stone,

He cannot chuse but hear :

And thus spake on that ancyent man,

The bright-eyed Marinere.

25       The Ship was cheer’d, the Harbour clear’d —

Merrily did we drop

Below the Kirk, below the Hill,

Below the Light-house top.

The Sun came up upon the left,

30       Out of the Sea came he :

And he shone bright, and on the right

Went down into the Sea.

Higher and higher every day,

Till over the mast at noon —

35       The wedding-guest here beat his breast,

For he heard the loud bassoon.

The Bride hath pac’d into the Hall,

Red as a rose is she ;

Nodding their heads before her goes

40       The merry Minstralsy.

The wedding-guest he beat his breast,  
 Yet he cannot chuse but hear:  
 And thus spake on that ancyent Man,  
 The bright-eyed Marinere.

45 Listen, Stranger! Storm and Wind,<sup>1</sup>  
 A Wind and Tempest strong!  
 For days and weeks it play'd us freaks—  
 Like Chaff we drove along.

50 Listen, Stranger! Mist and Snow,  
 And it grew wond'rous cauld:  
 And Ice mast-high came floating by  
 As green as Emerald.

And thro' the drifts the snowy clifts  
 Did send a dismal sheen;  
 55 Ne shapes of men ne beasts we ken—  
 The Ice was all between.

The Ice was here, the Ice was there,  
 The Ice was all around:  
 It crack'd and growl'd, and roar'd and howl'd—  
 60 Like noises of a swound.<sup>2</sup>

At length did cross an Albatross,  
 Thorough the Fog it came;  
 And an it were a Christian Soul,  
 We hail'd it in God's name.

<sup>1</sup>ll. 45-50 **Listen, Stranger!** etc. Instead of this and the five lines following, there was:

“But now the Northwind came more fierce,  
 There came a Tempest strong!  
 And Southward still for days and weeks  
 Like chaff we drove along.

“And now there came both Mist and Snow,  
 And it grew wondrous cold;”

<sup>2</sup>l. 60 “A wild and ceaseless sound.”

Coleridge afterward returned to the reading of 1798.

- 65       The Mariners gave it biscuit-worms,  
           And round and round it flew :  
 The Ice did split with a Thunder-fit ;  
           The Helmsman steer'd us thro'.
- 70       And a good south wind sprung up behind,  
           The Albatross did follow ;  
 And every day for food or play  
           Came to the Marinere's hollo !
- 75       In mist or cloud on mast or shroud  
           It perch'd for vespers nine,  
 Whiles all the night thro' fog smoke-white<sup>1</sup>  
           Glimmer'd the white moon-shine.
- 80       " God save thee, ancyent Marinere !  
           " From the fiends that plague thee thus —  
 " Why look'st thou so ? " — with my cross bow  
           I shot the Albatross.

---

 II

- The Sun came up upon the right,  
       Out of the Sea came he ;  
 And broad as a weft upon the left  
       Went down into the Sea.
- 85       And the good south wind still blew behind,  
       But no sweet Bird did follow  
 Ne any day for food or play  
       Came to the Marinere's hollo !
- 90       And I had done an hellish thing  
       And it would work 'em woe :  
 For all averr'd, I had kill'd the Bird  
       That made the Breeze to blow.

<sup>1</sup> l. 75 Fog smoke-white. Corrected in the *Errata* to "fog-smoke white."



- Ne dim ne red, like God's own head,  
The glorious Sun uprist :  
95 Then all averr'd, I had kill'd the Bird  
That brought the fog and mist.  
'Twas right, said they, such birds to slay  
That bring the fog and mist.
- The breezes blew, the white foam flew,  
100 The furrow follow'd free :  
We were the first that ever burst  
Into that silent Sea.
- Down dropt the breeze, the Sails dropt down,  
'Twas sad as sad could be  
105 And we did speak only to break  
The silence of the Sea.
- All in a hot and copper sky  
The bloody sun at noon,  
Right up above the mast did stand,  
110 No bigger than the moon.
- Day after day, day after day,  
We stuck, ne breath ne motion,  
As idle as a painted Ship  
Upon a painted Ocean.
- 115 Water, water, every where  
And all the boards did shrink ;  
Water, water, every where,  
Ne any drop to drink.
- The very deeps did rot : O Christ !  
120 That ever this should be !  
Yea, slimy things did crawl with legs  
Upon the slimy Sea.
- About, about, in reel and rout  
The Death-fires danc'd at night ;  
125 The water, like a witch's oils,  
Burnt green and blue and white.

And some in dreams assured were  
 Of the Spirit that plagued us so :  
 Nine fathom deep he had follow'd us  
 130 From the Land of Mist and Snow.

And every tongue thro' utter drouth  
 Was wither'd at the root ;  
 We could not speak no more than if  
 We had been choked with soot.

135 Ah wel-a-day ! what evil looks  
 Had I from old and young ;  
 Instead of the Cross the Albatross  
 About my neck was hung.

---

### III

I saw a something in the Sky<sup>1</sup>  
 140 No bigger than my fist ;  
 At first it seem'd a little speck  
 And then it seem'd a mist :  
 It mov'd and mov'd, and took at last  
 A certain shape, I wist.

145 A speck, a mist, a shape, I wist !  
 And still it ner'd and ner'd ;  
 And, an it dodg'd a water-sprite,  
 It plung'd and tack'd and veer'd.

With throat unslack'd, with black lips bak'd  
 150 Ne could we laugh, ne wail :  
 Then while thro' drouth all dumb they stood  
 I bit my arm and suck'd the blood  
 And cry'd, A sail ! a sail !

<sup>1</sup>ll. 139-140. I saw a something in the sky. In place of this and the following line, this stanza was inserted :

“ So past a weary time ; each throat  
 Was parch'd and glaz'd each eye,  
 When, looking westward, I beheld  
 A something in the sky.”

155       With throat unslack'd, with black lips bak'd  
           Agape they hear'd me call:  
       Gramercy! they for joy did grin  
       And all at once their breath drew in  
           As they were drinking all.

160       She doth not tack from side to side —  
           Hither to work us weal  
       Withouten wind, withouten tide  
           She steddies with upright keel.

165       The western wave was all a flame,  
           The day was well nigh done!  
       Almost upon the western wave  
           Rested the broad bright Sun;  
       When that strange shape drove suddenly  
           Betwixt us and the Sun.

170       And strait the Sun was fleck'd with bars  
           (Heaven's mother send us grace)  
       As if thro' a dungeon grate he peer'd  
           With broad and burning face.

175       Alas! (thought I, and my heart beat loud)  
           How fast she neres and neres!  
       Are those *her* Sails that glance in the Sun  
           Like restless gossameres?

180       Are those <sup>1</sup> *her* naked ribs, which fleck'd <sup>2</sup>  
           The sun that did behind them peer?  
       And are those two all, all the crew,  
           That woman and her fleshless Pheere?

*His* bones were black with many a crack,  
       All black and bare, I ween;

<sup>1</sup> l. 177. *Those*, corrected in *Errata* to "these."

<sup>2</sup> ll. 177-180. Instead of this stanza was the following:

      "Are those *her* Ribs, thro' which the Sun  
       Did peer, as thro' a grate?  
       And are these two all, all her crew,  
       That Woman, and her Mate?"

Jet-black and bare, save where with rust  
Of mouldy damp and charnel crust  
185 They're patch'd with purple and green.

*Her* lips are red, *her* looks are free,  
Her locks are yellow as gold :  
Her skin is as white as leprosy,  
And she is far liker Death than he ;  
190 Her flesh makes the still air cold.

The naked Hulk alongside came  
And the Twain were playing dice ;  
" The Game is done ! I've won, I've won ! "  
Quoth she, and whistled thrice.

195 A gust of wind sterte up behind  
And whistled thro' his bones ;  
Thro' the holes of his eyes and the hole of his mouth  
Half-whistles and half-groans.

With never a whisper in the Sea  
200 Off darts the Spectre-ship ;  
While clombe above the Eastern bar  
The horned Moon, with one bright Star  
Almost atween the tips.

One after one by the horned Moon  
205 (Listen, O Stranger ! to me)  
Each turn'd his face with a ghastly pang  
And curs'd me with his ee.

Four times fifty living men,  
With never a sigh or groan,  
210 With heavy thump, a lifeless lump  
They dropp'd down one by one.

Their souls did from their bodies fly, —  
They fled to bliss or woe ;  
And every soul it pass'd me by,  
215 Like the whiz of my Cross-bow.

## IV

“ I fear thee, ancyent Marinere !  
“ I fear thy skinny hand ;  
“ And thou art long and lank and brown  
“ As is the ribb'd Sea-sand.

220 “ I fear thee and thy glittering eye  
“ And thy skinny hand so brown —  
Fear not, fear not, thou wedding guest !  
This body dropt not down,

Alone, alone, all all alone  
225 Alone on the wide wide Sea ;  
And Christ would take no pity on  
My soul in agony.

The many men so beautiful,  
And they all dead did lie !  
230 And a million million slimy things  
Liv'd on — and so did I.

I look'd upon the rotting Sea,  
And drew my eyes away ;  
I look'd upon the eldritch deck,  
235 And there the dead men lay.

I look'd to Heaven, and try'd to pray ;  
But or ever a prayer had gusht,  
A wicked whisper came and made  
My heart as dry as dust.

240 I clos'd my lids and kept them close,  
Till the balls like pulses beat ;  
For the sky and the sea, and the sea and the sky  
Lay like a load on my weary eye,  
And the dead were at my feet.

- 245       The cold sweat melted from their limbs,  
          Ne rot, ne reek did they ;  
The look with which they look'd on me,  
          Had never pass'd away.
- 250       An orphan's curse would drag to Hell  
          A spirit from on high :  
But O ! more horrible than that  
          Is the curse in a dead man's eye !  
Seven days, seven nights I saw that curse,  
          And yet I could not die.
- 255       The moving Moon went up the sky  
          And no where did abide :  
Softly she was going up  
          And a star or two beside —
- 260       Her beams bemock'd the sultry main  
          Like morning frosts yspread ;  
But where the ship's huge shadow lay,  
The charmed water burnt alway  
          A still and awful red.
- 265       Beyond the shadow of the ship  
          I watch'd the water-snakes :  
They mov'd in tracks of shining white ;  
And when they rear'd, the elfish light  
          Fell off in hoary flakes.
- 270       Within the shadow of the ship  
          I watch'd their rich attire :  
Blue, glossy green, and velvet black  
They coil'd and swam ; and every track  
          Was a flash of golden fire.
- 275       O happy living things ! no tongue  
          Their beauty might declare :  
A spring of love gusht from my heart,  
          And I bless'd them unaware !  
Sure my kind saint took pity on me,  
          And I bless'd them unaware.

280       The self-same moment I could pray ;  
          And from my neck so free  
The Albatross fell off, and sank  
          Like lead into the sea.

---

## V

285       O sleep, it is a gentle thing  
          Belov'd from pole to pole !  
To Mary-queen the praise be even  
She sent the gentle sleep from heaven  
          That slid into my soul.

290       The silly buckets on the deck  
          That had so long remain'd,  
I dreamt that they were fill'd with dew  
          And when I awoke it rain'd.

295       My lips were wet, my throat was cold,  
          My garments all were dank ;  
Sure I had drunken in my dreams  
          And still my body drank.

300       I mov'd and could not feel my limbs,  
          I was so light, almost  
I thought that I had died in sleep,  
          And was a blessed Ghost.

      The roaring wind ! it roar'd far off,  
          It did not come anear ;  
But with its sound it shook the sails  
          That were so thin and sere.

305       The upper air bursts into life,  
          And a hundred fire-flags sheen  
To and fro they are hurried about ;  
And to and fro, and in and out  
          The stars dance on between.

310       The coming wind doth roar more loud;  
          The sails do sigh, like sedge:  
          The rain pours down from one black cloud  
          And the Moon is at its edge.

          Hark! hark! the thick black cloud is cleft,  
315       And the Moon is at its side:  
          Like waters shot from some high crag,  
          The lightning falls with never a jag  
          A river steep and wide.

          The strong wind reach'd the ship: it roar'd  
320       And dropp'd down, like a stone!  
          Beneath the lightning and the moon  
          The dead men gave a groan.

          They groan'd, they stirr'd, they all uprose,  
          Ne spake, ne mov'd their eyes:  
325       It had been strange, even in a dream  
          To have seen those dead men rise.

          The helmsmen steer'd, the ship mov'd on;  
          Yet never a breeze up-blew;  
          The Mariners all 'gan work the ropes,  
330       Where they were wont to do:  
          They rais'd their limbs like lifeless tools —  
          We were a ghastly crew.

          The body of my brother's son  
          Stood by me knee to knee:  
335       The body and I pull'd at one rope,  
          But he said nought to me —  
          And I quak'd to think of my own voice<sup>1</sup>  
          How frightful it would be!

          The day-light dawn'd — they dropp'd their arms  
340       And cluster'd round the mast:  
          Sweet sounds rose slowly thro' their mouths  
          And from their bodies pass'd.

<sup>1</sup>ll. 337, 338 omitted.



Around, around, flew each sweet sound,  
Then darted to the sun :  
345 Slowly the sounds came back again  
Now mix'd, now one by one.

Sometimes a dropping from the sky  
I heard the Lavrock sing ;  
Sometimes all little birds that are  
350 How they seem'd to fill the sea and air  
With their sweet jargoning,

And now 'twas like all instruments,  
Now like a lonely flute ;  
And now it is an angel's song  
355 That makes the heavens be mute.

It ceas'd : yet still the sails made on  
A pleasant noise till noon,  
A noise like of a hidden brook  
In the leafy month of June,  
360 That to the sleeping woods all night  
Singeth a quiet tune.

Listen, O listen, thou Wedding-guest !<sup>1</sup>  
"Marinere ! thou hast thy will :  
"For that, which comes out of thine eye, doth make  
365 "My body and soul to be still."

Never sadder tale was told  
To a man of woman born :  
Sadder and wiser thou wedding-guest !  
Thou'lt rise to morrow morn.

370 Never sadder tale was heard  
By a man of woman born :  
The Mariners all return'd to work  
As silent as before.

<sup>1</sup> ll. 362-377. These four stanzas omitted.

375       The Mariners all 'gan pull the ropes,  
          But look at me they n'old :  
          Thought I, I am as thin as air —  
          They cannot me behold.

380       Till noon we silently sail'd on  
          Yet never a breeze did breathe :  
          Slowly and smoothly went the ship  
          Mov'd onward from beneath.

385       Under the keel nine fathom deep  
          From the land of mist and snow  
          The spirit slid : and it was He  
          That made the Ship to go.  
          The sails at noon left off their tune  
          And the Ship stood still also.

390       The sun right up above the mast  
          Had fix'd her to the ocean :  
          But in a minute she 'gan stir  
          With a short uneasy motion —  
          Backwards and forwards half her length  
          With a short uneasy motion.

395       Then, like a pawing horse let go,  
          She made a sudden bound :  
          It flung the blood into my head,  
          And I fell into a swoond.

400       How long in that same fit I lay,  
          I have not to declare ;  
          But ere my living life return'd,  
          I heard and in my soul discern'd  
          Two voices in the air,

405       "Is it he? quoth one, "Is this the man?  
          "By him who died on cross,  
          "With his cruel bow he lay'd full low  
          "The harmless Albatross.

“ The spirit who ’bideth by himself  
“ In the land of mist and snow,  
“ He lov’d the bird that lov’d the man  
“ Who shot him with his bow.

410

The other was a softer voice,  
As soft as honey-dew :  
Quoth he the man hath penance done,  
And penance more will do.

---

VI

## FIRST VOICE.

“ But tell me, tell me ! speak again,  
“ Thy soft response renewing —  
“ What makes that ship drive on so fast ?  
“ What is the Ocean doing ?

415

## SECOND VOICE.

“ Still as a Slave before his Lord,  
“ The Ocean hath no blast :  
“ His great bright eye most silently  
“ Up to the moon is cast —

420

“ If he may know which way to go,  
“ For she guides him smooth or grim.  
“ See, brother, see ! how graciously  
“ She looketh down on him.

425

## FIRST VOICE.

“ But why drives on that ship so fast  
“ Withouten wave or wind ?

## SECOND VOICE.

“ The air is cut away before,  
“ And closes from behind.

430

“Fly, brother, fly ! more high, more high,  
“Or we shall be belated :  
“For slow and slow that ship will go,  
“When the Marinere’s trance is abated.”

435 I woke, and we were sailing on  
As in a gentle weather :  
’Twas night, calm night, the moon was high ;  
The dead men stood together.

440 All stood together on the deck,  
For a charnel-dungeon fitter :  
All fix’d on me their stony eyes  
That in the moon did glitter.

The pang, the curse, with which they died,  
Had never pass’d away :  
445 I could not draw my een from theirs  
Ne turn them up to pray.

And in its time the spell was snap’t,  
And I could move my een :  
I look’d far-forth, but little saw  
450 Of what might else be seen.

Like one, that on a lonely road  
Doth walk in fear and dread,  
And having once turn’d round, walks on  
And turns no more his head :  
455 Because he knows, a frightful fiend  
Doth close behind him tread.

But soon there breath’d a wind on me,  
Ne sound ne motion made :  
Its path was not upon the sea  
460 In ripple or in shade.

It rais’d my hair, it fann’d my cheek,  
Like a meadow-gale of spring —  
It mingled strangely with my fears,  
Yet it felt like a welcoming.

465       Swiftly, swiftly flew the ship,  
          Yet she sail'd softly too:  
      Sweetly, sweetly blew the breeze —  
          On me alone it blew.

          O dream of joy! is this indeed  
470       The light-house top I see?  
      Is this the Hill? Is this the Kirk?  
          Is this mine own countrée?

      We drifted o'er the Harbour-bar,  
          And I with sobs did pray —  
475       "O let me be awake, my God!  
          "Or let me sleep away!"

      The harbour-bay was clear as glass,  
          So smoothly it was strewn!  
      And on the bay the moon light lay,  
480       And the shadow of the moon.

      The moonlight bay was white all o'er,<sup>1</sup>  
          Till rising from the same,  
      Full many shapes, that shadows were,  
          Like as of torches came.

485       A little distance from the prow  
          Those dark-red shadows were;  
      But soon I saw that my own flesh  
          Was red as in a glare.

      I turn'd my head in fear and dread,  
490       And by the holy rood,  
      The bodies had advanc'd, and now  
          Before the mast they stood.

      They lifted up their stiff right arms,  
          They held them straight and tight;

<sup>1</sup> l. 481-502. These five stanzas omitted.

495       And each right-arm burnt like a torch,  
          A torch that's borne upright.  
Their stony eye-balls glitter'd on  
          In the red and smoky light.

          I pray'd and turn'd my head away  
500       Forth looking as before.  
There was no breeze upon the bay,  
          No wave against the shore.

          The rock shone bright, the kirk no less  
          That stands above the rock :  
505       The moonlight steep'd in silentness  
          The steady weathercock.

          And the bay was white with silent light,  
          Till rising from the same  
Full many shapes, that shadows were,  
510       In crimson colours came.

          A little distance from the prow  
          Those crimson shadows were :  
I turn'd my eyes upon the deck —  
          O Christ ! what saw I there ?

515       Each corse lay flat, lifeless and flat ;  
          And by the Holy rood  
A man all light, a seraph-man,  
          On every corse there stood.

          This seraph-band, each wav'd his hand :  
520       It was a heavenly sight :  
They stood as signals to the land,  
          Each one a lovely light :

          This seraph-band, each wav'd his hand,  
          No voice did they impart —  
525       No voice ; but O ! the silence sank,  
          Like music on my heart.

- Eftsones I heard the dash of oars,  
 I heard the pilot's cheer :  
 My head was turn'd perforce away  
 And I saw a boat appear.  
 530
- Then vanish'd all the lovely lights ;<sup>1</sup>  
 The bodies rose anew :  
 With silent pace, each to his place,  
 Came back the ghastly crew.  
 535 The wind, that shade nor motion made,  
 On me alone it blew.
- The pilot, and the pilot's boy  
 I heard them coming fast :  
 Dear Lord in Heaven ! it was a joy,  
 540 The dead men could not blast.
- I saw a third — I heard his voice :  
 It is the Hermit good !  
 He singeth loud his godly hymns  
 That he makes in the wood.  
 545 He'll shrieve my soul, he'll wash away  
 The Albatross's blood.

---

 VII

- This Hermit good lives in that wood  
 Which slopes down to the Sea.  
 How loudly his sweet voice he rears !  
 550 He loves to talk with Marineres  
 That come from a far Contrée.
- He kneels at morn and noon and eve —  
 He hath a cushion plump :  
 It is the moss, that wholly hides  
 555 The rotted old Oak-stump.

<sup>1</sup>ll. 531-536. This stanza omitted.

The Skiff-boat ne'rd: I heard them talk,  
    " Why, this is strange, I trow!  
" Where are those lights so many and fair  
    " That signal made but now?

560 " Strange, by my faith! the Hermit said —  
    " And they answer'd not our cheer.  
" The planks look warp'd, and see those sails  
    " How thin they are and sere!  
" I never saw aught like to them  
565 " Unless perchance it were

    " The skeletons of leaves that lag  
    " My forest brook along:  
" When the Ivy-tod is heavy with snow,  
" And the Owlet whoops to the wolf below  
570 " That eats the she-wolf's young.

    " Dear Lord! it has a fiendish look —  
    (The Pilot made reply)  
" I am a-fear'd. — " Push on, push on!  
    " Said the Hermit cheerily.

575 The Boat came closer to the Ship,  
    But I ne spake ne stirr'd!  
The Boat came close beneath the Ship,  
    And strait a sound was heard!

580 Under the water it rumbled on,  
    Still louder and more dread:  
It reach'd the Ship, it split the bay;  
    The Ship went down like lead.

Stunn'd by that loud and dreadful sound,  
    Which sky and ocean smote:  
585 Like one that hath been seven days drown'd  
    My body lay afloat:  
But, swift as dreams, myself I found  
    Within the Pilot's boat.



590 Upon the whirl, where sank the Ship,  
The boat spun round and round :  
And all was still, save that the hill  
Was telling of the sound.

I mov'd my lips : the Pilot shriek'd  
And fell down in a fit.  
595 The Holy Hermit rais'd his eyes  
And pray'd where he did sit.

I took the oars : the Pilot's boy,  
Who now doth crazy go,  
Laugh'd loud and long, and all the while  
600 His eyes went to and fro,  
" Ha ! ha ! " quoth he — " full plain I see,  
" The devil knows how to row."

And now all in mine own Countrée  
I stood on the firm land !  
605 The Hermit stepp'd forth from the boat,  
And scarcely he could stand.

" O shrieve me, shrieve me, holy Man !  
The Hermit cross'd his brow —  
" Say quick," quoth he, " I bid thee say  
610 " What manner man art thou ?

Forthwith this frame of mine was wrench'd  
With a woeful agony,  
Which forc'd me to begin my tale  
And then it left me free.

615 Since then at an uncertain hour,<sup>1</sup>  
Now oftimes and now fewer,  
That anguish comes and makes me tell  
My ghastly aventure.

<sup>1</sup>ll. 615-618. Instead of this stanza was the following :

" Since then at an uncertain hour  
That agony returns ;  
And till my ghastly tale is told  
This heart within me burns."

I pass, like night, from land to land ;  
620 I have strange power of speech ;  
The moment that his face I see  
I know the man that must hear me ;  
To him my tale I teach.

What loud uproar bursts from that door !  
625 The Wedding-guests are there ;  
But in the Garden-bower the Bride  
And 'Bride-maids singing are :  
And hark the little Vesper-bell  
Which biddeth me to prayer.

O Wedding-guest ! this soul hath been  
630 Alone on a wide wide sea :  
So lonely 'twas, that God himself  
Scarce seemed there to be.

O sweeter than the Marriage-feast,  
635 'Tis sweeter far to me  
To walk together to the Kirk  
With a goodly company.

To walk together to the Kirk  
And all together pray,  
640 While each to his great father bends,  
Old men, and babes, and loving friends,  
And Youths, and Maidens gay.

Farewell, farewell ! but this I tell  
To thee, thou wedding-guest !  
645 He prayeth well who loveth well,  
Both man and bird and beast.

He prayeth best who loveth best,  
All things both great and small :  
For the dear God, who loveth us,  
650 He made and loveth all.

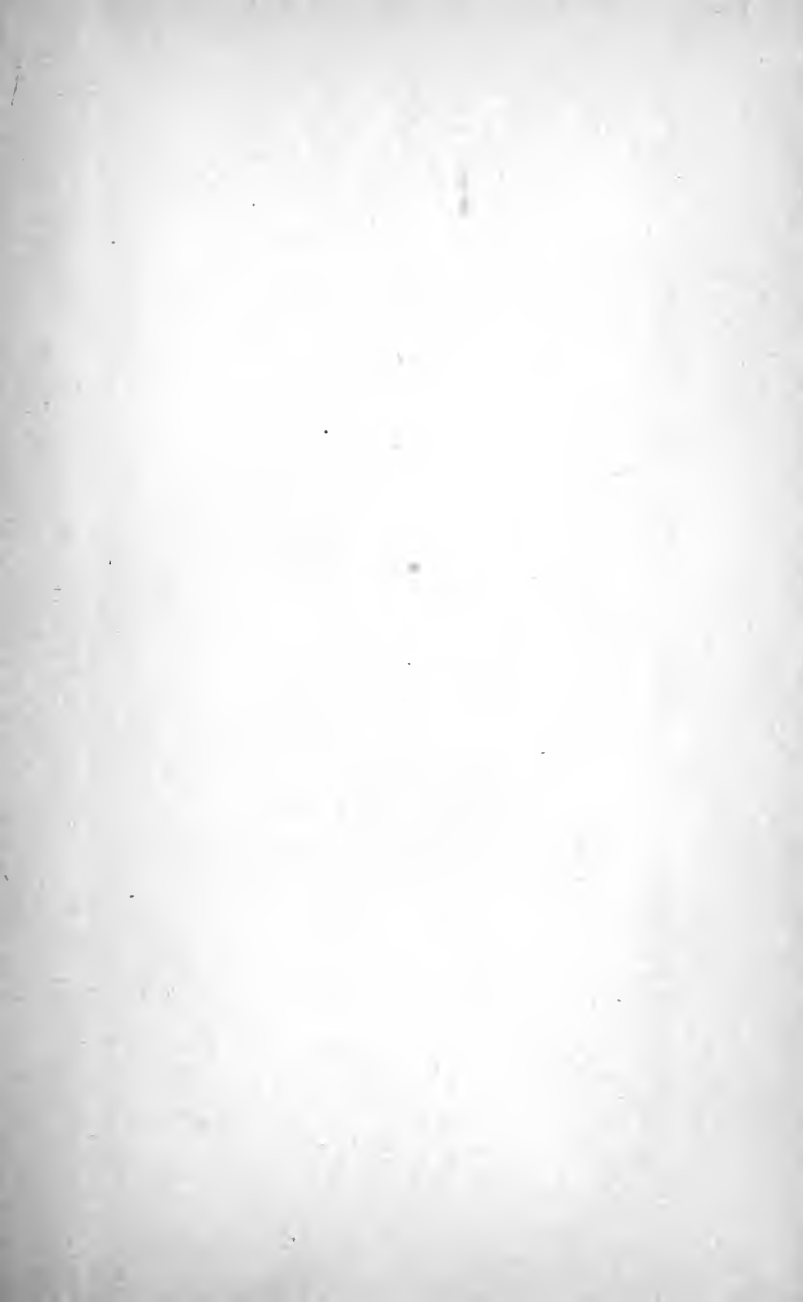
The Marinere, whose eye is bright,  
Whose beard with age is hoar,  
Is gone ; and now the wedding-guest  
Turn'd from the bridegroom's door.

655

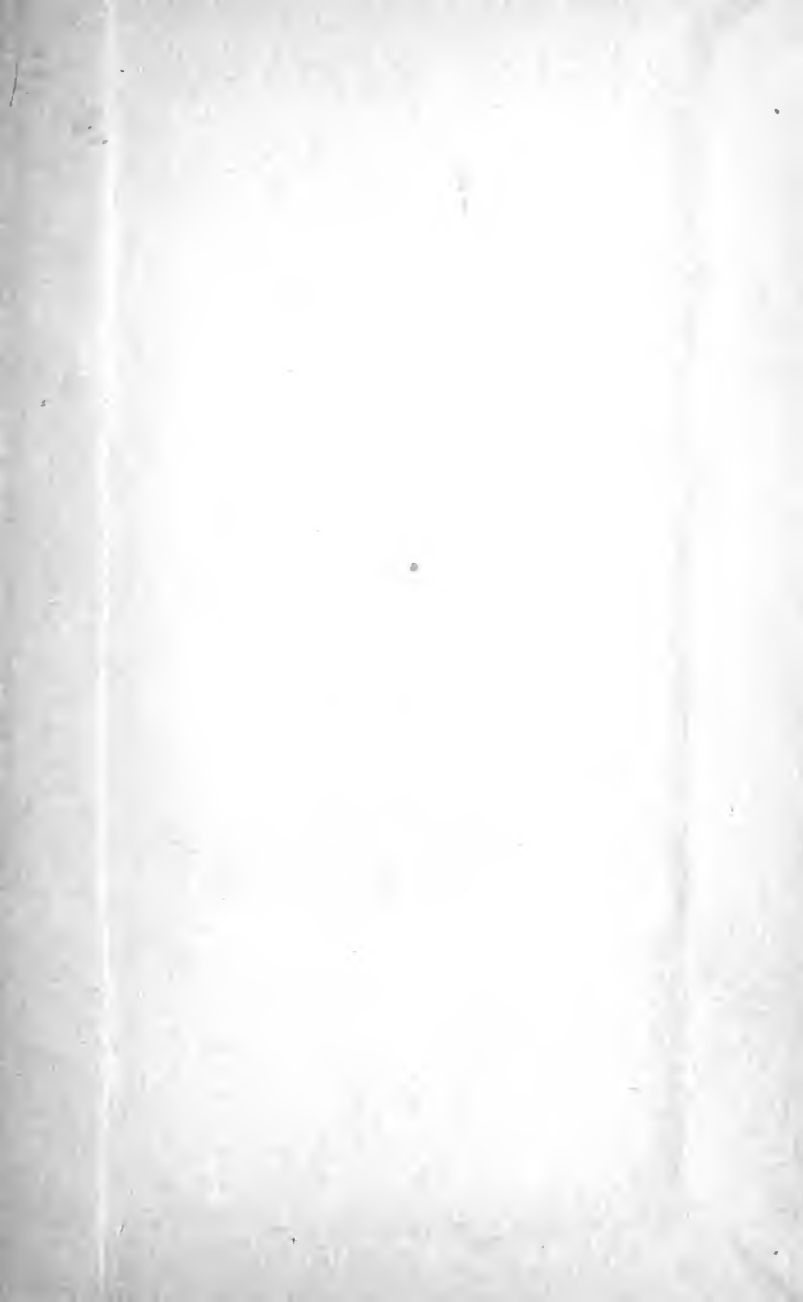
He went, like one that hath been stunn'd  
And is of sense forlorn :  
A sadder and a wiser man  
He rose the morrow morn.

456

Frazier







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